

Proposed Relocation of the Eastleigh Household Waste Recycling Centre

Planning Statement

1. THE SITE

- 1.1 The site proposed for the relocation of the Eastleigh Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) from Woodside Avenue in Eastleigh is an unused area of land extending to 1.62 hectares with access from Stoneycroft Rise off, and to the south of, Chestnut Avenue in Chandler's Ford parish. It is on the south-western edge of the built-up area of Eastleigh and Chandler's Ford.
- 1.2 The land is bounded to the south east by the M3 motorway on a low embankment and to the north east by Chestnut Avenue, a main distributor road, which runs under the motorway and is accordingly in a cutting alongside the site. To the north and north west is an area of commercial development, with land immediately to the north occupied by a large BMW car sales and maintenance business and by car parks serving the office blocks situated on the opposite side of Stoneycroft Rise to the north west of the site.
- 1.3 To the south west of the site is 'Freespace', a significant public open space area laid out with a BMX track and skateboard facilities owned by Eastleigh Borough Council. Land further to the west, also owned by the Borough Council, is managed for wildlife conservation.
- 1.4 The site itself is an area of open grassland and scrub which slopes irregularly down from the north west towards the motorway and Chestnut Avenue. The site and surrounding area is known to support significant numbers of all three species of the more common reptiles and dormice which are a European protected species. The semi-natural grassland habitat on the site is also of value in its own right as well as providing excellent habitat for reptiles.
- 1.5 With regard to archaeological issues, advice from consultation with Hannah Fluck at Hampshire County Council Planning & Heritage is that:

"I have checked the records and there are no archaeological issues I wish to raise in this instance".

2. FACILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 2.1 The proposal forms part of a programme of improvements to HWRCs across Hampshire. Most recently new facilities/site improvements have

been provided in Waterlooville, Gosport, Casbrook and Andover. An efficient and practical design has evolved for a new generation of split-level sites which in turn has generated specific site criteria.

2.2 In summary the site criteria adopted by Hampshire County Council Waste and Resources section, the operating body, are as follows:

- **Size** - 0.8ha preferred, with a minimum of 0.6ha
- **Shape** – rectangular, 120m long by 65m wide
- **Land Classification** – industrial use or other brownfield site
- **Site Condition** – clear of spoil, buildings and ground contamination
- **Land Ownership** – freehold or long (99yrs+) lease
- **Consents** - capable of obtaining planning permission and an Environmental Permit
- **Proximity to Housing** – cannot be located adjacent to housing but should be not too remote from residential areas
- **Proximity to Protected Areas** - not in close proximity to environmentally sensitive areas or flood plain
- **Road Requirement** – requires good highway access and links for service vehicles and public access. Ideally at the end of a cul-de-sac
- **Service Utilities** - connection to main services (other than gas) required

2.3 As a public amenity an HWRC is provided and operated as a cost to the council tax payer. Excessive costs in procuring a suitable site or in the construction of a new facility must therefore be avoided. In this case, the location of the facility relative to the users within Eastleigh and Chandler’s Ford and to existing facilities in south Winchester and Fair Oak is also an important consideration.

3. SITE SEARCH

3.1 A search for a replacement of the Woodside Avenue facility commenced in 2005 and since that time a number of sites have been considered against the site criteria. As well as the application site the following sites were considered as part of the search:

Site	Advantages	Disadvantages
Brickfield Lane, Chandler’s Ford	Good access within an established industrial location	Poor shape, on street parking, possible contamination. Significant site & clean up costs

Reliant Close, Chandler's Ford	Industrial location	Site too large with existing building
Chickenhall Lane, Eastleigh	Industrial location	Poor access and poor proximity to residential demand. Too large and expensive
Dutton Lane, Eastleigh	Industrial location	Site too large – Local Plan indicates further development resisted until access improved. Freehold not available
Parham Drive, Eastleigh	Industrial location good road links	Large building on site one way access road with on street parking
South of Barton Park, Eastleigh	Industrial location	Site too large. Poor road access. Owner not willing seller
School Lane, Chandler's Ford	Good access	Owner [Police] not a willing seller, site expensive. Other development constraints
Allington Lane, West End	Industrial location	Poor access. Site too large. Not a willing seller. Distant from residential demand

3.2 None of the sites considered, apart from the application site, met or came close to meeting the search criteria or were available for development. The application site meets the majority of the site criteria, is vacant and is in the ownership of the Borough Council which is willing to make the site available for immediate development.

4. THE NEED FOR RELOCATION OF THE EASTLEIGH HWRC

4.1 Hampshire County Council, as waste disposal authority, has a legal responsibility to arrange “for places to be provided at which persons resident in its area may deposit their household waste and for the disposal of waste so deposited” (section 51 para. 1(b) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990).

4.2 The County Council discharges this duty by the provision throughout the county of 24 facilities designated as household waste recycling centres.

4.3 The existing Eastleigh Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) is a small, single level site which has been at its current location since the early 1980s. It is located on Woodside Avenue in Eastleigh on land in

the freehold ownership of the County Council and has permanent planning permission for its current use. The Woodside site received 7,246 tonnes of waste in 2009/10 of which 54% was recycled and it was the 17th busiest out of 24 sites in Hampshire.

- 4.4 The site is of an outdated design and is too small for the level of use it now receives. It was not designed to cater for the current volume of household recycling and it will not be able to cater for the sought-after expansion in recycling to 60% of all waste by 2020 (Hampshire Minerals & Waste Core Strategy 2007 – Policies S4 & S5). Household waste sites need to be improved to help meet these targets.
- 4.5 Issues with traffic congestion are experienced at times of peak use, typically at weekends during the spring and summer. The physical constraints of the Woodside site mean that there is parking for only 7 - 8 cars and stacking capacity for a further 5 or 6 cars. It is a regular occurrence for cars to back up onto Woodside Avenue causing local congestion and a traffic hazard. It creates particular dangers for cyclists using the cycle lane along Woodside Avenue and can obstruct the footway. The problem is compounded by the fact that the site has to be temporarily closed, for health and safety reasons, during container servicing operations. These closures can be for up to 20 minutes. Anecdotal evidence suggests that users prefer to drive to other more modern centres such as Winchester rather than use the Woodside site.
- 4.6 The standard opening hours at the existing Eastleigh HWRC are:
- Summer - (1 April to 30 September)
Daily (including bank holidays) 8am - 7pm
 - Winter - (1 October to 29 February)
Daily 8am – 4pm
 - Spring - (1 March to 31 March)
Daily 8am – 5pm
 - Closed - 25 and 26 December and 1 January

These will be the opening hours for the proposed new site.

- 4.7 The County Council's experience shows that when an HWRC is relocated from a small single level site to a larger split level one there is an increase in material throughput at the site of about 20%. The majority of this increase is in recyclable materials such as green waste, wood and soil and rubble with only a small proportion being residual waste. Over the full years either side of development the recycling rate increased by just under 8%. Whilst there are numerous factors that impact on both throughput and recycling rate the redevelopment is a significant factor. Of the 20% increase in material, some is diverted from other nearby recycling centres as people choose to use a large new site and some is diverted from kerbside bins. The remainder

seems to be new material that people decide to bring to the site that they have been storing for a period of time and then decide to dispose of due to the site being larger, more efficient and an overall better customer experience.

4.8 The proposed new Eastleigh HWRC will include:

- seven double bin bays
- a total of 21 waste containers
- an upper level storage area at each end of the bin bays
- separate areas for bin servicing and for customer vehicles to avoid conflict and the necessity to close the site every time servicing takes place
- on-site stacking lanes for customer vehicles
- a secure perimeter fence with lockable gates
- appropriate landscaping and planting to the perimeter of the site.

4.9 From the site entrance, bin servicing vehicles and customer vehicles will be separated with the servicing vehicles directed to a low level area in order to access the bin bays. Customers will be directed into a stacking lane that will serve to keep queuing cars within the site and off the public highway. The layout will increase customer throughput on the site, as customers will be able to continue to use the site whilst bin servicing is in operation. Customer car parking will be provided at the upper level of the site and there will also be access from here to the upper level storage areas.

4.10 The existing site has no disabled parking facilities and being single level requires users to climb steps to deposit material. The proposed development will have 2 dedicated disabled parking bays and the split level design means that there will be no steps for the public to negotiate when depositing material.

4.11 The new site will contain parking for up to 22 vehicles and stacking capacity for around 25 cars. This is a significant improvement over the existing Eastleigh HWRC in Woodside Avenue.

4.12 Drawing R.J509002/GA-001 shows the general arrangement, site layout and highway access with the site boundary of the proposed development.

4.13 During the construction of the new HWRC the existing Eastleigh HWRC in Woodside Avenue will remain open until the new site has been constructed and commissioned. The existing site will only be permanently closed the night before the new site is to open to minimise service disruption. The construction period for the new HWRC will be approximately six months.

- 4.14 Once the existing Eastleigh HWRC is permanently closed it will be decommissioned and the Environmental Permit will be surrendered to the Environment Agency.
- 4.15 The Woodside site, with adjoining land, is the subject of a site specific policy, 97.H, in the adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review (2001 - 2011) proposing mixed use redevelopment bringing much needed residential, open space and commercial development in a sustainable location. The Borough Council has resolved to grant outline planning permission for the residential and commercial developments under references O/09/66188 and O/09/66323. The approvals include conditions stating:
*“No development shall commence unless and until the operation of the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) has ceased and the access for the HWRC has been closed.
Reason: In the interest of highway safety”*
- 4.16 A household waste recycling centre would not be a compatible use adjacent to the proposed residential development.
- 4.17 The benefits arising from the relocation of the facility can be summarised as follows:

Social benefits:

- Facilitates the construction of approximately 90 new homes, about 35% of which will be affordable homes, against background of over 4,000 households on the housing register, and employment development on the present site and the adjoining land.
- Provides a household waste recycling facility accessible to people with disabilities.
- Removes the safety risk to pedestrians, cyclists and motorists arising from queuing traffic on Woodside Avenue.
- More convenient waste handling for members of the public with a quicker turn around and less queuing.

Environmental benefits:

- Potential increase in the volume of material recycled and reused and recovered as opposed to landfilled.
- Larger overall site area will accommodate landscape planting and screening which is absent at Woodside Avenue, with associated ecological, visual and environmental benefits.
- Some reduction in CO2 emissions from queuing traffic.

5. THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It replaces the previously published range of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). The NPPF does not, however, contain any specific waste policies as national waste planning policy is to be published as part of the National Waste Management Plan for England. The NPPF accordingly advises that for the time being the Waste Planning Policy Statement remains in place.
- 5.2 The Government's Planning Policy Statement 10 'Planning for Sustainable Waste Management' was published on 30 March 2011. It described the Government's overall objective as being "to protect human health and the environment by producing less waste and by using it as a resource wherever possible".
- 5.3 The PPS is directed primarily at strategic planning for the management of waste and the provision of adequate associated facilities, noting that investment would be required in appropriate facilities to achieve the Government's objective. The PPS does not specifically mention the provision, location or layout of household waste recycling centres, but notes that sites for the provision of waste management facilities should have regard to the principles in the PPS, consider the physical and environmental constraints of the site and the development proposed, having particular regard to neighbouring land uses, and should have regard to the impacts of the proposals on environmental quality and the capacity of transport infrastructure. It notes that the use of brownfield and unused or underused land should be prioritised.
- 5.4 Planning applications for development must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan currently consists of the approved South East Plan (May 2009), the saved policies of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review (2001 – 2011) adopted in May 2006 and the Hampshire Minerals & Waste Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2007).
- 5.5 The adopted Local Plan will be replaced in due course by the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2029, currently at the pre-submission consultation stage.
- 5.6 Although the Government announced its intention to abolish the regional spatial strategies over two years ago, none have yet been revoked. The South East Plan accordingly remains a valid part of the development plan. The avowed intention to revoke the Plan limits the weight that should be accorded to its policies but they are nonetheless a material consideration.

- 5.7 The South East Plan encourages local authorities to address the need for facilities to support the recycling and recovery of materials from waste and to seek to identify appropriate sites for this purpose. The Plan advises (policy W17) that sites should be conveniently accessible from existing and proposed urban areas, possess good transport connections and be compatible with adjoining uses. Development in the green belt or other designated countryside locations should not be precluded where the development would not compromise the objectives of the designation.
- 5.8 Policy S4 of the Minerals and Waste Plan notes that “*there will be a progressive increase in the average recycling and composting rates* “. Policy S5 notes the capacity requirements for Recycling, Composting and Recovery in the period to 2020, including facilities for the reception, segregation and processing of 1.86 million tonnes a year of municipal commercial and industrial waste.

Eastleigh Local Plan Policies

- 5.9 The adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review (2001 – 2011) shows the site to be outside the urban edge (which is drawn tightly around the boundaries of the commercial development to the north and then south eastwards along Chestnut Avenue) and in the countryside. It is accordingly subject to policy 1.CO of the Plan which states:

“Planning permission will not be granted for development outside the urban edge unless:

- i. it is necessary for agricultural, forestry or horticultural purposes and a countryside location is required;*
- ii. it is for an outdoor recreational use or is genuinely required as ancillary to such a use and does not require the provision of buildings, hardstanding or structures which are of a form, scale or design which would demonstrably harm the character of the locality; or*
- iii. it is essential for the provision of a public utility service or the appropriate extension of an existing education or health facility and it cannot be located within the urban edge; or*
- iv. it meets the criteria in the other policies of this Plan.*

The extension of private gardens into the countryside will not be permitted.”

- 5.10 The site is also in the strategic gap between Eastleigh and Southampton as defined in the Local Plan and is accordingly subject to policy 2.CO of the Local Plan which states:

“Planning permission will not be granted for development which would physically or visually diminish a strategic gap as identified on the proposals map.”

- 5.11 A strip of the site area and of Freespace, the adjacent land to the south west, adjoining the boundary with the motorway is shown as an area where landscape improvements are to be sought in accordance with policy 20.CO of the Local Plan. This states that:

“In the areas identified for landscape improvements, as shown on the Proposals Map, proposals which would prejudice such improvements or which in themselves would be detrimental to the quality of the landscape in these areas, will not be permitted. Developers’ willingness to contribute towards landscape improvements will be a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications.”

- 5.12 Other relevant Local Plan policy considerations are:

Policy 24.NC which safeguards protected species and policy 25.NC which seeks to protect other features of importance for biodiversity. Both policies require measures to mitigate the impact of any development upon ecological interests which would be affected by any development.

Policy 32.ES which seeks to ensure that air, land or water pollution generated by development is adequately controlled.

Policy 36.ES which requires development to incorporate well designed lighting that does not give rise to light pollution.

Policy 59.BE which requires good quality design which has regard to the characteristics of the site in all aspects of development including boundary treatment, landscape design, hard surfacing and access arrangements.

Policies 100.T and 102.T which require satisfactory access provision and arrangements to ensure that the safety and function of the road network is not adversely affected.

- 5.13 The emerging Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2029 (the new Local Plan) has reached the pre-submission consultation stage. The submission of the Plan to the Secretary of State is anticipated in the next few months.

- 5.14 The new Local Plan continues to show the site as being in the countryside, outside the urban edge, but it is no longer shown as being within the Eastleigh – Southampton strategic gap. Strategic policy S8 of the new Local Plan concerns the countryside areas of the borough, stating that:

“In the countryside, there is a presumption against new development, subject to other policies of this local plan.”

And that:

“Planning permission will be granted for new development in the countryside provided it is related to: (among other things)

viii Essential public utilities (Policy DM8)”

Policy DM8 of the new Local Plan supports the provision of new utilities infrastructure.

5.15 Strategic policy S8 goes on to state that:

“In permitting new development in the countryside and countryside gaps the Borough Council will wherever possible seek to:

a. avoid adverse impacts on their rural or coastal character, the intrinsic character of the landscape and the biodiversity of the area; and

b. secure long-term beneficial management practices that will enhance the landscape and biodiversity of the countryside and coast.”

5.16 The new Local Plan also includes a specific policy, CF5, relating to the proposed household waste recycling centre which states:

“Land east of Stoneycroft Rise

An area of 1.62 hectares of land east of Stoneycroft Rise and south-west of Chestnut Avenue, Eastleigh, is open grassland and scrub which slopes irregularly down to the north from the M3 motorway which adjoins the eastern boundary of the site. To the north and north west is an area of commercial development, and to the south west of the site is a public open space area (Freespace) laid out with a BMX track and skateboard facilities. There are features and species of local biodiversity interest on the site.

There is a need to relocate the existing household waste recycling centre from a site at Woodside Avenue, Eastleigh, to enable a comprehensive redevelopment of that site (Policy E4, section 6.6 below). This site is considered to have the potential to accommodate the centre and to enable it to expand to accommodate the future needs of the borough.

Policy CF5, Land east of Stoneycroft Rise and south-west of Chestnut Avenue

An area of 1.62 hectares of land east of Stoneycroft Rise and south-west of Chestnut Avenue as defined on the policies map is allocated for a household waste recycling centre subject to the following criteria:

- i. buildings and other associated structures and the means of enclosure are of a scale, design and siting which minimises the physical and visual intrusion of development within the wider landscape;*
- ii. a landscape buffer is provided on the south eastern and south western boundaries of the site;*
- iii. any biodiversity interest within the site is protected and enhanced;*
- iv. a widened pedestrian footway and cycle path being provided to link the site to Chestnut Avenue along Stoneycroft Rise; and*
- v. a statement is submitted which sets out the operational parameters of the use of the site and how noise, dust and other potential pollutants will be controlled and, where necessary, mitigated.*

Hampshire Minerals & Waste Core Strategy

5.17 Section 26 of the Core Strategy Development Control contains the relevant policy for this application, policy DC13 - Waste Management and Recycling (including Aggregate Recycling Facilities), which states:

“Waste management developments (excluding landfill) will be permitted provided that the site:

- a. Is identified as a site, or within an area suitable for waste management uses, in the Hampshire Waste Management Plan or Minerals Plans, or*
- b. Re-uses/redevelops previously developed land and/or redundant agricultural and forestry buildings (including their curtilages), or*
- c. Is within a planned area of large-scale development, or*
- d. Is on employment land, preferably co-located with complementary activities, and*
- e. Has good access to the minerals and waste lorry routes as shown on the Key Diagram, and where possible, the site enables the use of water-borne and rail freight, and*
- f. In the case of recovery and treatment sites, incoming waste shall be subject to pre-treatment, either on or off site to maximise the potential for recycling, and where technically possible, energy will be generated and used and the by-products, including heat, will be reused or recycled, and*
- g. In the case of sites providing public access, the site shall be accessible for use by disabled people.”*

5.18 Other relevant Minerals & Waste policies are:

DC3 - Impact on Landscape and Townscape:

“Development will only be permitted if due regard is given to the likely visual impact of the proposed development and its impact on, and the need to maintain and enhance, the distinctive character of the landscape or townscape. If necessary, additional design, landscaping, planting and screening, including planting in advance of the commencement of the development, should be proposed.”

DC6 – Highways:

“Major mineral extractions, landfills and ‘strategic’ recycling, aggregate processing and recovery and treatment facilities, will be permitted provided they have a suitable access to and/or route to the minerals and waste lorry route as illustrated on the Key Diagram. In all cases, minerals and waste development will only be permitted if it pays due regard to the likely volume and nature of traffic that would be generated by the proposal and the suitability of the proposed access to the site and of the road network that would be affected.

Consideration should be given to highway capacity, road and pedestrian safety, congestion and environmental impact, and whether any highway improvements are required and whether these could be carried out satisfactorily without causing unacceptable environmental impact.”

DC7 – Biodiversity:

“Minerals and waste developments will only be permitted if due regard is given to the likely effects of the proposed development on biodiversity and, where possible, proposals should conserve and enhance biodiversity.... “

DC8 - Pollution, health, quality of life and amenity:

“Minerals and waste development will only be permitted if due regard is given to the pollution and amenity impacts on the residents and users of the locality and there is unlikely to be an unacceptable impact on health and/or the quality of life of occupants of nearby dwellings and other sensitive properties. Where necessary minerals and waste developments should include mitigation measures, such as buffer zones between the site and such properties.”

DC11 – Flooding:

“Minerals and waste development will only be permitted in accordance with the conclusions of a Flood Risk Assessment.”

6. SITE LAYOUT AND LANDSCAPE SCHEME

- 6.1 The proposed HWRC is to occupy land at the south west end of the site, with access off Stoneycroft Rise and with the shortest length of the development presented towards the M3 and the longer part aligned parallel to a raised mound situated on the adjoining Freespace land to the south. This siting will help to mitigate the visual impact of the development from the M3, (particularly from the northbound carriageway) which is also screened in part by the native tree and understorey vegetation established on the motorway embankment.
- 6.2 From the main part of the Freespace site views towards the proposed facility will be effectively blocked by the existing mound and hedgerow on the south west boundary.
- 6.3 From Stoneycroft Rise and the adjoining BMW site to the west and north west there are limited views into the site through existing trees and vegetation. There are no office windows on the BMW garage site directly overlooking the development, although views down into the site from the upper floors of office development on the opposite side of Stoneycroft Rise may be had.
- 6.4 The proposed development will not be visible from Chestnut Avenue, which is located at the bottom of a steep bank which drops some 3 - 4m from the site to road level and is covered with mature trees and undergrowth.
- 6.5 To further mitigate the visual impact of the proposed development and minimise the import/export of soil to and from the site the facility is to be partially dug into the ground, with some additional buffering achieved through mounding and planting between the M3 and the edge of the development. Further mounding by the site entrance and around the northern corner of the site will also help to soften the appearance of the development from Stoneycroft Rise and the existing office car parks to the north.
- 6.6 The new mounding is to be planted in part with dense native vegetation to further screen views into the site from the M3, Stoneycroft Rise and from adjoining office car parks and the BMW site. This planting will also serve an ecological function to provide and link areas of existing dormouse habitat. The remaining predominantly open parts of the site will be managed mainly to provide a rough grassland habitat for reptiles.
- 6.7 As indicated above, the existing site is not prominent from public vantage points and the mounding and planting described will make a positive contribution to the appearance of the area and serve to enhance the landscape both visually and in terms of habitat improvement as required by policies 20.CO, 24.NC and 25.NC of the adopted Local Plan. The proposed siting and design of the site takes

account of the context of the and provides boundary treatment and planting which will contain and enhance the appearance of the development in accordance with policy 59.BE and the County Council's Minerals and Waste policy DC3. The proposals are designed to minimise impact on the countryside as required under the new Local Plan policy S8 and also include the provision of landscape buffers around the site which accord with policy CF5.

7. PLANNING POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The principle of providing a replacement and much improved household waste recycling centre to serve the residents of Chandler's Ford and Eastleigh is fully in accordance with the Government's Waste PPS, with the South East Plan and with the County Council's Minerals and Waste Plan. The proposal must therefore be assessed in relation to local planning policy considerations.
- 7.2 Whilst development generally on the proposed site of the HWRC in a defined countryside area of the borough would be contrary to policy 1.CO of the adopted Local Plan the policy does allow for some exceptions including, at criterion iii, development essential for the provision of a public service which cannot be located within the urban edge. Established industrial estates in the Borough are heavily built-up but, as noted above, a number of potentially suitable sites for the relocation of the HWRC in the Eastleigh and Chandler's Ford areas have been examined. None have proved suitable for this development. Over a period of several years it has not proved possible to identify any other potentially suitable sites for the relocation of the HWRC on land within the urban edge in the Eastleigh area.
- 7.3 In supporting the principle of the development the Borough Council is satisfied that the use of the land at Chestnut Avenue for this purpose would be an appropriate exception to the normal policy presumption against development in the countryside. The location is also at variance with policy DC13 b) of the Minerals & Waste Plan but it is considered that a similar exception to that policy is justified in view of the need for the facility and the absence of a suitable alternative location.
- 7.4 It is a little more difficult to justify overriding the clear and firm policy presumption against development in the strategic gap. The policy is, however, concerned with the impact, physical and visual, of development in the gap. The site is open land, but it is overshadowed to the north and north west by commercial development and is bounded to the south east by the M3 motorway. To the south west, beyond Freespace, is woodland which limits views to and from the south (and which also forms the boundary of the borough with Test Valley Borough Council). The site is not prominent or exposed in the wider landscape and its access would be taken from an existing road serving a variety of other commercial uses. Furthermore, the limited

views of the site from public vantage points – the motorway, Chestnut Avenue and Freespace – are dominated by the commercial development to the north.

- 7.5 The land makes a very limited contribution to the strategic gap and the use of the site for an HWRC, the development of which would not involve any particularly tall structures, would diminish the gap physically but would not visually diminish the gap in any material way.
- 7.6 The land has limited potential for any positive uses more appropriate to a countryside/strategic gap location, being closely contained by other development and suffering from very intrusive motorway traffic noise. The construction of the HWRC will be accompanied by judicious landscape mounding and by landscape planting that will reduce the impact of motorway noise on the development and on the uses to the north and reduce the visual impact of the existing development on passers-by on the motorway. It could also contribute to the gap by enhancing the visual amenity of the area and the sense of leaving the built-up area and entering an area of countryside and undeveloped land, in accordance with the objectives of policy 20.CO of the Local Plan and policy DC3 of the Minerals & Waste Plan.
- 7.7 Because of the presence on the site of protected species, and a European protected species in particular, and habitat of importance for biodiversity, a full ecological impact assessment and mitigation strategy is being submitted with the application. It concludes that after taking mitigation into account, the net impact on dormice will be slight positive, the net impact on the slow worm and common lizard will be neutral to slight positive and there will be a net slight adverse impact on the adder population. It is considered that the overall benefits of the development, including enabling the development for housing of the existing HWRC and adjacent land, outweigh the slight adverse impact on one of the protected species present on this site.
- 7.8 Highway issues are addressed in the traffic statement. The site is situated at the end of a commercial cul-de-sac, off the main road network. The on-site design and layout has been designed to minimise off-site disruption and the development would be unlikely to create any significant traffic issues with the adjoining commercial uses as peak usage periods for the recycling centre would not conflict with the peak use of the offices. The urban nature of Stoneycroft Rise is such that the addition of the HWRC would not have any additional urbanising effect on this approach to the site.
- 7.9 As well as providing access to commercial premises, Stoneycroft Rise is, however, the sole means of access to Freespace, which attracts large numbers of young people on foot, skateboard and bicycle. The peak use of Freespace is likely to coincide with the busiest periods of use of the HWRC at weekends and this could lead to conflict and some danger to users of the access.

- 7.10 The proposal includes alterations to the highway and footpaths including the widened of the western footway such that it becomes a shared use footway cyclepath. This should help to reduce conflict and minimise risks.
- 7.11 The provision of facilities to maximise the recycling of waste is a high priority for the Borough Council and the County Council and the construction of an efficient and up-to-date HWRC to serve Eastleigh and to replace the existing inadequate facilities in Woodside Avenue would be of enormous benefit to the local community and would help to maximise the amount of waste material recycled in the borough. The release of the Woodside Avenue site for a mixed use development also has significant benefits.
- 7.12 Overall, and notwithstanding the location of this site in the countryside and strategic gap as defined in the adopted Local Plan, it is considered that this is a suitable site for the much-needed relocation of the Eastleigh HWRC. The circumstances of the site and the overall benefit of the project are recognised by the proposed allocation of the site for the relocation of the HWRC in the Borough Council's new Local Plan for the period to 2029.

3 October 2012