

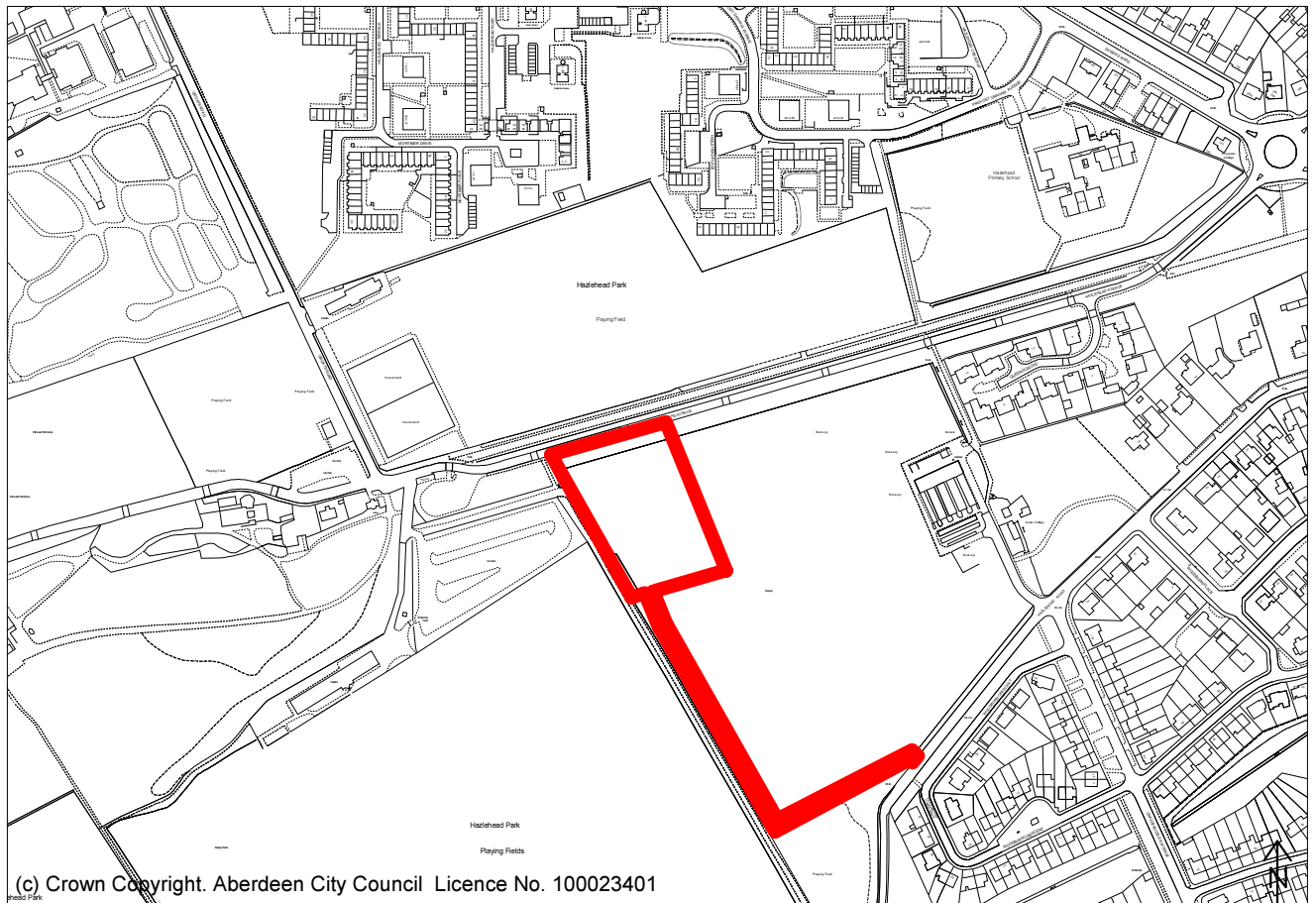
GROVE NURSERY, HAZLEHEAD AVENUE, HAZLEHEAD

CONSTRUCTION OF A HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION OF AN ACCESS ONTO HAZLEHEAD AVENUE, CONSTRUCTION OF HARDSTANDING AND INTERNAL CIRCULATION ROADS, CONSTRUCTION OF AN AMENITY BUILDING, SITING OF A RAIN SHELTER AND CONTAINERS, LANDSCAPING AND BOUNDARY TREATMENT.

For: SITA UK, Kriss Furness

Application Ref. : P111281
Application Date : 30/08/2011
Officer : Alex Scott
Ward: Hazlehead/Ashley/Queen's Cross(J Farquharson/M Greig/J Stewart/J West)

Advert : Dev. Plan Departure
Advertised on : 21/09/2011
Committee Date : 12 January 2012
Community Council : Comments



RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions

DESCRIPTION

The proposed development site is located in the north west corner of Grove Nursery and forms part of a wider landholding formerly operated by the Council as part of their parks and gardens facilities. The site lies some 4.5 km to the west of the city centre and 200 metres to the east is a small housing development, Queens Grove, which is also accessed from Queens Road via Hazlehead Avenue.

Immediately to the site's northern boundary lies the tree lined verge of Hazlehead Avenue beyond which lies sports fields then the housing area of Hazlehead. The Queens Road roundabout, which gives access to Hazlehead Avenue lies 500 metres to the east of the site and Hazlehead Primary School is located 250 metres north east of the site to the north of Hazlehead Avenue. The Hazlehead Academy complex is located on Groats Road 450 metres to the north west of the site

The Grove Nursery land extends 200 metres south towards Hazledene Road over which is a housing area. There is a footpath aligned north-south along the western boundary of the site which comprises a border of mature conifer trees.

To the west of the site lies the main Hazlehead Park with a car park and bus turning area adjacent to the boundary. The features of the park include the Piper Alpha Memorial 550 metres to the west and the Queen Mother Rose Garden 630 metres to the west.

The application site was previously used to store composted green waste and the surface is occupied by several large compost heaps which are vegetated and one which supports tree cover. Owing to these mounds the site levels vary but there is general fall in level towards the south by some 7 metres over the length of the site.

The site is enclosed by a 2 metre high privet hedge along the northern boundary with Hazlehead Avenue and screens views of the site from the road. The road verge contains several trees which are clustered in the western and central sections with a break in the north-eastern corner.

The eastern boundary comprises 6.5 metre high poplar trees which merge into a line of willow trees towards the southern edge though there is no demarcation of the southern boundary of the application site.

HISTORY

There is no history of any planning applications on this site.

PROPOSAL

The application site measures some 1.2 hectares in area and is rectangular in shape with a northern boundary of 90 metres length and a site depth of 121 metres. The margins of the site will be landscaped and the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) located within the central rectangular area comprising some 7000 square metres of surfacing. The site access, for both public and service vehicles will be located in the north-east corner of the site taking access direct from Hazlehead Avenue.

The site is intended to be developed as a Household Waste Recycling Centre which aims to offer an essential service to local residents to transport household waste for recycling and disposal. The site will not accept commercial waste. The site will be laid out to provide access to a range of containers for a range of waste including wood and cardboard, garden waste, metal, rubble and glass. There will no facility for disposal of food waste and no processing of waste will occur on site, the containers being removed for processing and onward disposal/recycling at a separate location.

The facility is designed with an operating capacity of 8000 tonnes per annum and will operate 7 days a week. The opening hours will be 10:00 to 20:00 on weekdays and 9:00 to 20:00 at weekends during summer. Winter opening will be 10:00 to 17:00 weekdays and 9:00 to 17:00 at weekends. The site will be manned and supervised during opening hours and kept secure and locked overnight.

Access to the facility will be by a simple priority T junction towards the site's north east corner directly on to Hazlehead Avenue, this will be for access and egress though within the site a one-way system with a bypass lane will operate. The access is located at a natural break in the road side line of trees though 7 small trees will require to be removed to provide the access and sight lines. A section of the existing privet hedge which forms the site boundary will also require removal and a security gate, probably timber clad, will be installed.

Whilst the majority of trips to the site will be made by private cars the junction will also provide access for larger service vehicles and provision will also be made for safe pedestrian access, mostly for staff as the nature of the bulk disposal of items in a HWRC militates against significant pedestrian use.

The 20 mph speed limit along Hazlehead Avenue and the existing speed bumps are to remain in place. It is also proposed that a pedestrian crossing be provided on Hazlehead Avenue adjacent to the entrance to the primary school

The internal site arrangements provide for segregation of members of the public, whose vehicles will be routed round the outside of the disposal facilities, from the central area which will contain the various waste receptacles and the manoeuvring area for the HGV service vehicles. The public access to the disposal points will contain ramps up to a higher level to facilitate dumping down into the waste containers at a lower level, thus minimal lifting of the waste will be required.

The site has been designed to accommodate a peak hour flow of up to 170 vehicles. There will be two lanes for stopping to dispose of waste and a third outside lane allowing visitors to by-pass sections to obtain unobstructed access to the chosen area. This facility will prevent any back up or queuing out on to the access road which is a feature of other more restricted HWRCs.

The central service yard will be surfaced in concrete and will require the installation of a surface drainage scheme, SUDS, to dispose of run-off. This will take the form of a series of underground water gullies and drains in addition to surface attenuation measures in the southern part of the site such as porous surfaces. There will be a hydrocarbon interceptor incorporated into the SUDS

scheme which will drain to the south to connect with existing drains along Hazledene Road. This connection is shown as a dog-leg linear feature extending from the south of the site on the application plans.

The site works will also include the provision of a staff amenity building and a rain shelter. Provision also needs to be made for site lighting columns which will also mount CCTV camera surveillance. There will be 7 columns, one at each corner and 3 within the skip area.

The works provide for extensive landscaping and screening provision such that the site will be well screened externally. The northern boundary already comprises an effective screen through this is to be broken by the formation of the access. However, immediately within the site a planted bund is to be provided where the access road splits into the one-way system, this will prevent direct views into the site. A security fence will be installed immediately to the rear of the hedge though will be coloured green.

The western boundary is already well screened by mature woodland but there is break in that line of trees about half way along the boundary. This is to be planted up and within the site an ivy (*Hedera*) hedge is to be planted to grow up a metal security fence to provide effective screening up to 2.2 metres. The ivy, which is evergreen, grows up through the metal lattice of the fence and provides both continuous green cover and a secure boundary treatment at the same time.

The eastern boundary is substantially complete through an access gap will be planted up. The site is currently open to the south but a thick margin of shrubs and trees is to be planted along this line which will also contain a continuation of the 2.2 metre high *Hedera* security fence.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This application has been accompanied by a range of specific studies which include a Planning, Design and Access Statement, an Ecological Impact Assessment, a Noise Impact Assessment, a Transport Statement and a Statement of Community Involvement.

With regard to this last item it should be noted that this application does not constitute a Major Development and the public consultation undertaken by the applicant in the summer of 2011 was not required by statute. Similarly a public meeting held in Hazlehead Academy on 21 September was advisory only though both were attended by planning staff on an informal basis.

It is important to emphasize that any planning application requires to be considered on its own merits and in terms of material planning considerations as they relate specifically to the proposals in front of the local planning authority. However, having clarified this it is also important to recognise that the selection of this site has been undertaken by the Housing and Environment Committee of Aberdeen City Council and a decision was made by that committee at their meeting on 13 April 2010 to select this site at Grove Nursery for a HWRC to serve the west of the City.

TRANSPORT STATEMENT

Sustainable transport is an integral aspect of sustainable development on which there is a strong emphasis. The study indicated that in a wider context the

proposed development is unlikely to increase traffic flows significantly though there will be a substantial numerical increase along Hazlehead Avenue. Hazlehead Avenue is currently lightly trafficked with average PM peak hour flow two-way of 150 vehicles. It was also a bus route till 2008 and is frequently used by coaches accessing Hazlehead park.

The site will be used mainly by private cars and small vans though HGV service vehicles will also use the route (only 3 to 4% of traffic). Many of these trips will already be on the road network as users will divert from existing trips possibly further afield.(for example, the existing HWRCs at East Tullos and Bankhead) The site is unlikely to be used by pedestrians and there are no barriers to walking in the vicinity though no pedestrian access in to the site will be provided apart from staff access. There will be cycling storage for staff and the nearest bus stop is on Queens Road.

A traffic survey was carried out in March 2011 and adjusted to allow for heavier summer use along Hazlehead Avenue by recreational traffic. The development will generate an average daily traffic of 1321 vehicles above the current very light traffic on Hazlehead Avenue. This will result in a 92% increase in traffic flow as the existing traffic flow of 1436 vehicles will increase to 2757 vehicles with the development (2012 figures assessed). 90% of site traffic will be along Hazlehead Avenue, 10% along Groats Road.

For the peak month of August it was assessed that the AM peak flow will be 113 visitors and 117 during the PM peak. This will increase on Saturdays and Sundays to 170 and 166 visitors at AM and PM peaks respectively. For the purposes of the assessment the peak hours were identified as 11:00 to 12:00 AM and 15:00 to 16:00 PM. In terms of HGV usage this was assessed as 20 trips per day.

The development traffic is not expected to generate any traffic issues nor capacity issues. The site access junction located 480 metres west of the Queens Road roundabout will operate comfortably within capacity and with minimal queuing. No mitigation is required to facilitate the safer crossing of pedestrians once the development is in place and no road safety issues are anticipated to be caused by this development.

A Pelican crossing is advised adjacent to the primary school partly in recognition of parent parking in the vicinity and to raise driver awareness of the crossing point.

NOISE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The acoustic assessment was undertaken with regard to Planning Advice Note (PAN) 1/2011- Planning and Noise and was used to evaluate the key noise impacts of the proposal. The nearest dwellings (9 receptors) were identified at Queens Grove and Hazlehead Place and the unoccupied park keeper's cottage along Hazlehead Avenue. Any effects on Hazlehead Primary School, north of Queens Grove and Hazlehead Academy were also taken into account.

Impacts are not normally considered significant where the difference between the rating of the development and the background noise is less than 5dB i.e. at this level the sensitivity is low. A difference of +5dB is of marginal significance.

Current noise levels at the site were measured on Friday 26 March between the hours of 00:30 hours to 19:00 hours. The noise sources were identified as traffic along Queens Road and cars and coaches along Hazlehead Avenue with particular reference to the speed bumps and the bus turning area and car park (with attendant door slamming) immediately to the west of the site. The background noise levels established were 50.1 Db lowest to a high of 52.6dB during daytime and a low of 39.7dB to a high of 50.5dB at night time.

It was assessed that traffic noise level would increase by an average of 2.8 dB and it is recognised that noise level attenuates over distance. The impact of the development at the nearest receptor will only increase by +0.8dB, therefore these impacts are considered negligible.

In this assessment the operational noise sources were:-

- cars arriving/leaving/manoeuvring within site/doors shutting
- HGV arriving/leaving/manoeuvring /doors shutting
- HGV reversing alarm/loading/unloading skips
- Glass deposited in containers
- Operation of cardboard compactor

A traffic through flow of 115 vehicles pr hour was used of which 25% would deposit glass. 1 HGV manoeuvre was allowed for per hour and one 5 minute operation of the compactor.

The worst case related to the smashing of glass on deposition giving a noise level at the locality of 79.0dB. The noise level of the compactor is 31.7 dB. A correction for distance must be taken into account and the average of all activities at the nearest receptor (noise sensitive location i.e. dwelling house) was 43.2dB. Provision was made for a specific noise level i.e. a peak of short duration of +5dB. However, the ambient noise level measured prior to development is 50.1dB from the survey and the cumulative noise level of both existing and development noise results in a level of 50.9dB, a net increase of +0.8dB, which is negligible. The net effect of the noise impact on the nearest residential property will be neutral or slight.

The applicants original assessment concluded that noise mitigation is not specifically required to reduce the noise emissions from the site.

ECOLOGICAL SURVEY

A site investigation was undertaken with regard to legally protected species and to assess the suitability of habitats for nesting birds, reptiles and red squirrels, roosting sites for bats (within trees and structures). Signs of badger activity within 50 metres from the site and signs of great crested newts were investigated but there are neither watercourses nor ponds within 500 metres of the site. A search was also carried out for Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.

The site is not covered by any statutory natural history designation. Though red squirrels, a key Biological Diversity Action Plan species, are located in the area the site is considered to be of slight importance for red squirrels. The conifers along the western boundary are to be retained and there is suitable alternative habitat around the Grove Nursery. The small number of pine and other conifers to be removed within the site show no current signs of use by red squirrels.

The new HWRC will require screening with vegetation around the periphery and native trees and shrubs will be used. It is concluded that there will be no significant impact on local ecology.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Notwithstanding that an application of this nature does not require Pre-Application Consultation owing to the relatively small scale of the proposal, the applicants undertook an exhibition of the proposals at Hazlehead Primary School in May 2011 and have submitted a report on the findings of this consultation as part of the application. There were 209 confirmed visitors to the drop in sessions with 164 comments forms received. The main opposition was to the location of the site as it was considered to be unsuitable due to its proximity to local schools and the adjacent park and to congestion on the local road network.

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO SUB-COMMITTEE

This application involves land within council ownership and has attracted a substantial body of objection; therefore the proposals require consideration by committee.

CONSULTATIONS

ROADS SECTION –the following conclusion was reached based on the findings of the transportation Assessment submitted with the application; - while Hazlehead Avenue will be subject to increased traffic this traffic will be well within the capacity of the road and the proposed development can be accommodated on the road network. Surveys did indicate that during the afternoon peak midweek there are more pedestrians on Hazlehead Avenue than expected and this will be school related. However as there are good pedestrian facilities and vehicle speeds are restricted it is not considered to be a major issue. The developer has offered to install a pelican crossing at this location but the roads Section would be reluctant to accept this offer as it is well below the threshold for a pelican crossing and this can increase the road safety hazard. However the committee should be aware of this proposal. Based on the information received there is no objection to this application.

SEPA – Had initially objected to the application as a Detailed Drainage Impact Assessment is required and inadequate surface water drainage details were initially submitted. This study has now been undertaken and SEPA have withdrawn their objection and confirmed agreement to the proposed drainage arrangements subject to Scottish Water accepting a connection to the sewer.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – following initial consideration of Acoustic Assessment identified detailed aspects which required further investigation, these are addressed in the updated report.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL –The site is located in the north-east corner of the Craigiebuckler and Seafeld community council area that have stated their objections as: - The Grove nursery site is designated as Greenbelt and identified by OP69 as suitable for a sports/tennis centre or recreation/countryside use appropriate to the rural character of the area. The proposed recycling centre is an industrial process and is entirely inappropriate and contradictory to the current local plan designation. Applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, there are no such considerations in relation to this site. The Council must follow the terms of the adopted 2008 Aberdeen local plan, the application is a major departure. No reference should be made of the emerging Aberdeen local development plan which is irrelevant as it is still under review. The proposals are contrary to the

guidance in Policy 28 Greenbelt of the local plan and also Policy 29: Green Space Network. The proposals constitute a concept which is out of character with its setting in the vicinity of Hazlehead Park. It is further suggested that as the Council has a financial interest in the location of a waste recycling centre in the area that it cannot take an unprejudicial approach or decision on this application and that the specific assessments (traffic and acoustic) commissioned by the applicant are biased in favour of the development and downplay the impact of the development. The Community Council have subsequently submitted a second objection to the noise impact and potential effect on air quality of the heavy goods vehicles servicing the site.

REPRESENTATIONS

Following neighbour notification and local press advertisement the period for submission of representations closed on 05 October. By that date 246 letters of objections had been received. There are also 3 petitions, one with 463 signatures, a second with 200 signatures and another petition from Hazlehead Parents Council with 324 names. The general point made was whilst there is wide support for recycling initiatives the choice of site at Grove Nursery is simple wrong and ill-advised. The objections raised very similar points to those of the community council and included:-

- The road infrastructure is not there to support large vehicles and would cause traffic congestion
- There is risk to schoolchildren and others in the area from traffic and hazardous dust.
- The trees along the avenue would be at risk
- There will be a loss of amenity to residents through noise and smells.
- Previous consultations have clearly indicated local opposition to the choice of this site; the site is unsuitable for the intended purpose.
- Hazlehead park is the 'jewel in the crown' of Aberdeen city and the location of the Piper Alpha Memorial and the Queen Mother Rose Garden.
- Another site, preferably the Kingswells Park and Ride area, should be chosen.
- This site is within Green Belt and should not be developed for an industrial type development.
- Should a local business wish to locate on this or a nearby site their application would be rightly refused planning permission.
- The development would give a negative impression to the visitors, many from outwith the city, to Hazlehead Park.
- The main entrance to a popular park and two schools is not an appropriate location for a large recycling facility.
- The proposed development of this site will act as a precedent for other industrial type development on the remainder of the Grove nursery site.
- The resultant 92% increase in traffic along Hazlehead Avenue associated with this proposal will result in real conflict and traffic congestion.
- The traffic and pedestrian surveys did not take account of events in Hazlehead Park or lunchtime activity from the adjacent Secondary School.
- The extensive area of hard standing required for this development will result in increased flood risk.
- Historically, the lands of Hazlehead Park were gifted to the citizens of Aberdeen for sporting and recreation purposes and should not be readily used for other purposes.

- Weekend operation of the facility will be particularly disturbing to local residents.
- There should be more appropriate sites that are not in the vicinity of schools, a public park and housing.
- Hazlehead Avenue is currently a quiet, green and pleasant access to the park, the additional noise and traffic will transform this quiet road.
- Hazlehead Avenue is not of sufficient width to allow the safe passage of heavy vehicles travelling in opposite directions.
- Hazlehead Park is an oasis of calm and a famous park, this ambience will be destroyed by the proposed development.
- The development will encourage and attract vermin and gulls with consequent health risk.
- The only good reason for locating the HWRC on this site is simply that there is space large enough to accommodate it, the choice of the site has no other merits and indicates cynical intent by the council to destroy an otherwise attractive location.
- Floodlighting of site during winter months will result in light pollution.
- The various assessments have underestimated the effect of the proposal.
- This action will diminish civic pride for Aberdeen City.
- Common sense dictates that a recycling centre should be located on an industrial estate.
- Anyone with a car can take heavy materials to Tullos for recycling.
- Hazlehead Park is a major tourist attraction which will be spoilt with a waste unit situated nearby.
- Siting a HWRC in this location will prejudice any future redevelopment of the park, particularly the MacKenzie golf proposals (or similar)
- It is a disgrace and insulting to locate a waste dump adjacent to a memorial for those who lost their lives in the Piper Alpha disaster.
- The Grove Nursery site is simply the cheapest option for the council and this has been the only consideration.
- There has been a flagrant conflict of interest throughout the council's handling of this proposal.
- It is an appalling proposal to site a waste facility in the midst of a residential/recreational area.
- There does not appear to any facility to monitor safety, noise, traffic or pollution were this proposal to succeed.
- The irony is that Aberdeen City Council proposes to destroy one of its best green spaces in an attempt to become more 'green' through an increase in recycling.
- The development of the HWRC in this location will prejudice any other future development in the park i.e. no other business, even if suitable for the park location, would wish to locate near the HWRC.
- The Council have stated that they shall protect and enhance the values of the Green Space Network whereas this proposal will destroy these functions.
- The various assessments were not carried out at the right times and were too restrictive.
- The choice of this site is based purely on grounds of convenient ownership and current availability rather than compatibility with its surroundings and the present activities in the area.

- The Council has an unenviable legacy of poor planning decisions; this should not be added to by the proposed development.

There are three letters of support pointing out that:-

Aberdeen currently lacks recycling facilities for a city of its size and that this site at Hazlehead has already been determined as the most suitable for the development.

It would be useful to have a recycling centre so close. There is still a reasonable distance between the site and the nearest houses. The site is quite discrete and well screened with existing hedges and trees which should be retained.

PLANNING POLICY

There is a substantial cascade of advice and direction regarding waste management and its relationship to the planning system from a European level down through National to regional strategic initiatives. These aspects will be referred to later as it is intended to deal with the local, site specific considerations as contained within the adopted local plan first.

The current Aberdeen Local Plan was formally adopted in June 2008. The Grove Nursery site, which extends to 7.4 hectares in total, was included in Green Belt but also identified as OP69 as an opportunity for a sports/tennis centre and/or recreation and countryside uses and other uses appropriate to the rural character of the area.

Policy 28: Green Belt states in section 1 that no development will be permitted in the green belt for purposes other than those essential for agriculture, forestry, recreation, mineral extraction or restoration or land renewal. Section 3 of the policy identifies OP69, Grove Nursery as suitable for indoor sports uses and would include provision for restoration of the site to a use compatible with the objectives of green belt at such time as the use for which planning permission is granted ceases to be operational.

Section 4 provides for infrastructure development that cannot be accommodated other than in the Green Belt and which has been identified in, and is wholly compatible with, the Development Plan. Section 7 requires that all proposals for development in the green belt must be of the highest quality in terms of siting, scale, design and materials. All developments in green belt should have regard to other policies of the local plan in respect of protection of landscape, trees and woodlands, natural heritage and pipelines and control of major accident hazards.

Local Plan Policy 19 deals with Waste Management Facilities and states that in order to meet the requirement of the EU Landfill Directive and the Area Waste Plan, there is a need to provide a number of new waste management facilities including:

- Facilities for the treatment of waste which may include material recovery, recycling and composting facilities, MBT plants, recycling centres and transfer stations.
- Energy recovery through the thermal treatment of waste.
- Waste disposal facilities – landfill and land raise.

Any proposal for a waste facility will be considered in terms of the need for it, its proposed location, its duration and viability, and its compatibility with the North

East Area Waste Plan, National Waste Strategy and National Waste Plan. Regard will be had to the effect on local amenity, agriculture, nature conservation, landscape, visual impact, scientific and archaeological interests, water and air quality, water resources, listed buildings and conservation areas, access and the highway system, and air traffic, whilst taking into account any measures designed to mitigate the impact of the proposal.

The City Council supports the development of a network of reclamation and recycling facilities in order to ensure that all areas of the City enjoy reasonable access to such facilities. Recycling facilities shall be provided at all new superstores or large supermarkets and in other developments where appropriate. Waste management sites are identified on the proposals map.

The emerging proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan is currently with the Scottish Government and undergoing examination by Reporters. It is anticipated that their conclusions will be made available early in the New Year (2012). The Reporters findings were not available at the time of completion of this report and it is suggested that a verbal update be given to Committee on 12 January regarding this matter.

The Grove Nursery site is covered by 2 designations, OP66 and OP67.

OP66 will remain in green belt and covers 5.9 hectares and an indoor sports use will be permitted on this site. Planning permission for such use may include provisions requiring restoration of the site to a use compatible with the objectives of the green belt at such time as the use for which planning permission is granted ceases to be operational.

OP67 is identified as the Grove Nursery Recycling Centre with a site area of 1.5 hectares and will comprise a New Community Facility with the site reserved for a recycling centre. The application site covers 1.2 Hectares of this area, 0.3 Hectares less than the proposed allocation in the proposed plan.

There were a combined total of 61 objections to these proposals in the proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

In Policy R4 – sites for New Waste Management Facilities, the following sites will be safeguarded for waste related uses: Grove Nursery at Hazlehead Park (OP67) – recycling centre to serve the west of the city.

The Scottish Government's Zero Waste Plan, published in June 2010 has set challenging targets to increase recycling rates and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. These initiatives require 50% recycling by 2013, 60% recycling by 2020 and 70% recycling (and no more than 5% to landfill) by 2025.

The second National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF2) was published in June 2009 and identifies Sustainable Development as one of the Key challenges of the next 20 years. In Para. 27 the effective management and re-use of waste is identified as being essential to a sustainable future. The EU Landfill directive requires the amount of biodegradable municipal waste going to landfill to be reduced by 35% of the total produced in 1995 by 2020. Landfill tax is increasing substantially. Additional facilities for the treatment and recycling of municipal, commercial and industrial waste are therefore urgently needed.

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) also requires to be taken into account and notes that managing waste as a resource has an important role to play in achieving

sustainable economic growth and a greener Scotland and refers to the Zero Waste goal and the targets set out in the Zero Waste Plan.

Planning Advice Note 63, Waste Management Planning (PAN63) was published in February 2002 and provides guidance in relation to land use and waste management. In Para 26, regarding waste collection, separation and Recycling facilities it is noted that these facilities play an important part in establishing sustainable waste management. The planning system can assist in establishing an appropriate network, particularly for facilities in residential and retail areas and centres of industry.

Para 27 goes on to say that such sites often give rise to householder complaints about traffic, noise, dust and amenity. These impacts can be mitigated by careful location and site management and controlled by appropriate conditions e.g. on operating hours and noise limits.

Civic amenity sites (now described as HWRCs) are provided to householders for the collection of household waste and recyclables at which the opening hours should seek a compromise between easy access and the standard of local amenity, particularly in the evening and at weekends or during the summer when the volume of garden and DIY waste increases

This PAN states that developments will be allowed where they do not adversely affect the amenity and will make a positive contribution to their setting. The specific passages dealing with Waste Management identify that waste management infrastructure has an important part to play in realising the Scottish Government's objective of a greener Scotland go on to state that the planning system has a crucial role to play in ensuring that installations are delivered in time to allow waste management targets to be met. Planning authorities should facilitate the provision of a network of waste management installations which enable the movement of waste to be minimised and EU and national targets to be met.

Provision for the additional waste management capacity required at city-region level must be made in strategic development plans. NPF2 identifies in Para 169 that other types of waste management infrastructure will include recycling and composting installations and they should be located close to the population centres they serve.

The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan, adopted in August 2009, provides the strategic context in the development plan. The plan states in Para 4.9 that the area produces around 1 million tonnes of waste each year. Of this, 285,000 tonnes is municipal waste, 136,000 tonnes of which is biodegradable. Most of this waste is disposed of in landfill sites. We need to make significant changes during the first half of the plan period (driven in part by European legislation) to manage this resource in an efficient and environmentally friendly way, in line with the 'waste hierarchy' and taking the 'proximity principle' into account. This will mean taking account of how we manage waste at the earliest stages in development proposals and providing new infrastructure to meet the targets.

The Structure Plan also makes reference to the quality of the Environment with the objective to make sure that new development maintains and improves the region's important built, natural and cultural assets.

Planning Advice Note (PAN) 1/2011: Planning and Noise provides very recent guidance for noise producing and noise sensitive development. The guidance considers the balance between proposed development and people that may consequently be exposed to noise together with the need to ensure that their quality of life is not unreasonably affected, emphasising that the acoustic implications of development should be considered at an early stage.

The PAN promotes the principle of good acoustic design and a sensitive approach to the location of new development. It promotes the appropriate location of new potentially noisy development, and a pragmatic approach to the location of new development within the vicinity of existing noise generating uses, to ensure that quality of life is not unreasonably affected and that new development continues to support sustainable economic growth. Environmental Health officers and/or professional acousticians should be involved at an early stage in development proposals which are likely to have significant adverse noise impacts or be affected by existing noisy developments.

EVALUATION

It is recognised that this application constitutes a Departure from the Development Plan as the site is not identified for a HWRC in the adopted local plan. The development plan comprises the local plan read in conjunction with the Structure Plan (which deals with strategic matters and is not site specific).

With reference to Scottish Government Circular 5/2009 – Hierarchy of Developments, this proposal (of 8,000 tonnes annual capacity) is classed as a Minor Development. The threshold for Major Waste Management Facilities relates to a site capacity in excess of 25,000 tonnes per annum.

The site, as part of a larger area, is identified for an alternative development in the adopted Aberdeen Local Plan and is specifically identified for the use as applied for in this application in the emerging Aberdeen Local Development Plan. The facility will operate for local use it is not of a strategic scale in terms of land use policy and is not therefore considered to constitute a Significant Departure from the Development Plan.

In applications of this nature the first requirements is to consider whether a departure hearing will be required The criteria used for this assessment were established by agreement of the report on hearings at the Development Management Sub-Committee meeting on 10 Sept 2010.

The facts to be taken into account are:

- The proposals constitute a departure from the Development Plan
- There is a financial interest in the site as it is owned by the Council
- There are a minimum of 20 objections (actually substantially more, 134)

The application falls into all three categories indicating that a hearing may be appropriate. The issues which require to be addressed in deciding whether a hearing is held include how up to date the development plan is, the relevance of the policies to the proposed development, the degree to which other material considerations are raised and the degree of local interest and objections raised.

The Structure Plan was adopted in 2009 and the Aberdeen local plan in 2008, both are up to date and contain policies relevant to the proposed development.

The substantial number of objections received in relation to this planning application, both in the form of letter and petitions, cover an extensive range of issues including the traffic impact, concerns with road congestion and safety, the potential impact on residential amenity due to noise and air quality, the safety of local school children and the loss of habitat and effect on local wildlife. These are all relevant planning considerations and relate to the policy coverage of the local plan.

- Given the significant level and nature of the objections it is considered that the most appropriate manner of addressing these concerns is to convene a hearing at which all parties will have an opportunity to state their views in front of the elected members of the Development Management Subcommittee. A recommended date of 22 November this year has been set aside for the Hearing subject to Committee agreement. Following the hearing a further detailed report will be prepared to allow full consideration of the proposals by a following committee.

This following report will also enable the findings of the Drainage Impact Assessment, on which the applicants are currently working, to be taken into account following further consultation with SEPA.

UPDATE FOR FINAL REPORT TO DMSC 12 JANUARY 2012

Following the Hearing on 22 November the committee were advised that a final report would be prepared to allow determination by a following committee. This report addresses the various issues raised in the substantial body of objection and at the Hearing. It is divided into the sections relating to the topics as listed in the initial report

Roads Issues

The traffic along Hazlehead Avenue will double as a result of the proposed development. This is broadly correct as identified in the Transport Assessment but it is also recognised that the existing, pre-development, level of traffic is very low and doubling of the volume does not introduce any concerns regarding capacity in the local road network.

The HWRC will not open until 10:00 am and therefore there will be no conflict with the morning opening houses of the two local schools at 9:00am. The TA used a peak hour flow between 3:00pm and 4:00pm to assess the impact of the traffic related with the HWRC and the evening traffic flow related to closing time of the two schools and no conflict was identified.

Hazlehead Avenue has sufficient width to allow the safe passage of two HGVs in opposite directions without the need for either vehicle to mount the road verge. However, the service vehicle flow related to the site is very low, possibly 6 HGVs per working day therefore the likelihood of two such vehicles being on the same length of road at the same time is very low. Notwithstanding this the road is used by coaches (and until recently by service buses) without obstruction or impediment. The applicants confirmed that, normally, there would only be one service vehicle on site at any one time though the service yard is arranged to allow for two vehicles to manoeuvre safely. Service vehicles would operate 7

days a week though there would not be a constant flow of HGVs as the likely frequency would be less than one an hour during normal operations. In fact the applicants have clarified that only the one service vehicle would be dedicated to the operation of this site and this single vehicle would deliver empty containers, uplift full ones and transfer them to the waste transfer stations at Sclattie and Tullos. They have also agreed that only Hazlehead Avenue would be used by this service vehicle and are in agreement with a condition to this effect.

From recent analysis of the operation of the existing HWRC at Scotstown Road at Perwinnes an annual throughput of 6,500 tonnes of waste was recorded for 2010. This required servicing by an average of 8.96 service vehicles per day during July and 8.48 during August, which were the busiest months. It should be noted that the Scotstown Road site has very limited facilities and that it is therefore necessary to provide a constant container exchange service during peak periods; the additional size of the proposed site will allow a smother pattern of container exchange reducing peak activity.

During the week the Hazlehead Avenue site is to be open for 10 hours and 11 hours at weekends during the summer and 7 and 8 hours respectively during winter. This in turn requires approximately one vehicle trip per hour of operation of the operation of the HWRC and the waste volume at Hazlehead Avenue is estimated to be lower at 5,000 tonnes per annum (though the site has been designed for a capacity of 8,000 tonnes). Winter use of HWRCs is generally less than half that of peak summer use.

The internal layout of the site is specifically designed to permit the entry of traffic equivalent to the maximum peak hour flow therefore there will be no congestion out on to Hazlehead Avenue. On exceptional occasions, such as highland games in Hazlehead Park, the site may be closed subject to agreement with the relevant council service.

Noise concerns

Further work on the assessment of potential noise nuisance was undertaken to clarify minor operational points. The initial response from Environment Health identified certain noise issues and the types of noise impact from these issues was not fully reflected in the original Acoustic Assessment submitted with the application.

In their recent updated consultation the Environmental Health service has confirmed that they are now satisfied with the coverage and conclusions of the applicant's additional noise impact report. A worst case scenario was investigated in which all noise generating activities within the HWRC site would occur at the one time. This assessment provided for a service vehicle manoeuvring within the site, the smashing of glass on deposition and the operation of cardboard compactor along with peak hour site usage simultaneously.

It was only during this extremely unlikely event that this rigorous assessment identified potential for complaints regarding site noise. This could occur with the current site layout with no further noise mitigation measures and there are techniques and alterations available which could address this issue.

A specific suite of planning conditions are advised to address this matter, the main requirement being for the preparation of a Noise Mitigation Plan to allow the applicants, in conjunction with relevant officers in the city council, to fine tune their operation and address issues, such the above, and implement appropriate measures. The other two conditions advised give specific noise levels which should not be exceeded and steps to be taken in the event of a noise complaint.

A specific additional acoustic study has been undertaken to establish the likely level of noise disturbance at the Piper Alpha Memorial. In the worst case scenario i.e. maximum noise generation likely at the HWRC, the additional noise impact was estimated at +0.1Db, which would be insignificant.

The noise generation from the site will not generally result in nuisance to any residential property in the vicinity and will largely be lost in the background noise environment, largely derived from traffic noise along Queens Road.

Concern was expressed regarding the noise associated with HGVs accessing and exiting the site along Hazlehead Avenue, particularly with regard to the risk of resonance from empty containers as vehicles progress over the speed table. It is considered that this could only occur on entrance as on exit the heavier, full containers will deaden any resonance. However, vehicle speeds will be low and likely less than the 20mph limit along this road. The traffic calming measures comprise a series of speed tables which are formed of a slight incline then a flat surface for 3-4 metres followed by a decline to normal road level. This arrangement is less likely to cause the empty container to move on the vehicle bed and the tendency to bounce is much more likely with the 'sleeping policeman' type of traffic calming measure or 'speed bump' which result in rapid oscillation of the vehicle which may lead to resonance from the empty container. The type of containers most commonly used, the roll on/off type, are fixed on the vehicle bed by clamps and are not normally free to move about on the bed.

Environment and Wildlife issues

There will be small degree of tree loss associated with the development, primarily the formation of the access off Hazlehead Avenue but none of the trees are of any individual merit and replacement planting will be undertaken on site. This will more than compensate for any tree loss and will be of more suitable stock in good condition. The ivy security fencing along the west and southern boundary has a useful wildlife function as well as its visual and security merits.

There is little wildlife interest within the site, a fox may have had a den in the area and this will be humanely relocated should it still be in use. There is no evidence within the site of red squirrel activity but conifers around the boundary, which will be enhanced by new planting, will maintain a safe corridor for squirrels to utilise the extensive grounds of the park.

The applicants are aware of their responsibilities regarding wildlife should red squirrels be present on site during site preparation works.

In terms of general amenity it should be noted that whilst floodlighting on columns will be provided during operational hours the site security will be provided overnight by low-level site lighting.

Planning policy

The site is not within Green Space Network and does not permit public access.

Though in Green Belt infrastructural facilities are permitted in such areas where mitigation can be provided. The enhanced boundary treatment is acceptable towards this objective.

The development is not within the Major category as defined by statute; it does not constitute a significant departure as it is not of strategic scale. An EIA is not required to allow full consideration of the impact of the proposals.

The site was selected after extensive investigation and this included a planning input at an early stage reflected in the allocation of the site in the emerging Local Development plan. This is a relevant aspect as this document was approved by the city council as planning authority in relation to the preferred policies contained in the replacement plan.

It has been claimed that the Grove Nursery area has the status as a Greenfield site. However, the site was allocated for an outdoor tennis centre in the adopted local plan and this is carried over into the emerging Local Development plan. An appropriate comparison is the David Lloyd Tennis and fitness Centre at Garthdee which exhibits a much higher level of traffic, is open from early morning to late evening and has floodlit tennis courts as well as incorporating a large building for indoor leisure and fitness facilities. Such a development would have resulted, and may yet result, in a much more intensive development of the site than the HWRC subject of this planning application.

Therefore, whilst the Grove Nursery site is within Green Belt it has been identified for a substantial development related to the provision of sport and recreation. It is not identified for any industrial purpose. The volume of waste involved in the HWRC would not be sufficient to attract co-location of waste recycling processors, such operations require volumes of material only available at a national scale and would be located near large areas of population and other downstream users and industries, and allocation at Hazlehead would therefore not be attractive to this industry.

In the emerging Aberdeen Local Development Plan there is provision for substantial new Greenfield residential development to the west of the city, for example 3000 dwellings at Countesswells. These large sites will be the subject of Masterplanning to deliver a phased development to the required high standard of layout and design. An integral aspect of these Masterplans will be the provision of suitably located and scaled recycling facilities for the new development. The HWRC at Hazlehead is specifically located to address the immediate need for a facility in the west of the existing city; it is not designed for the future development to the west. Equally, households in Aberdeenshire have the available facility at Westhill, they are unlikely to travel the extra distance in any significant numbers to the Hazlehead site.

Site Selection

The Aberdeen Local Plan is currently in the process of being replaced. The Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan was approved for consultation by the Council in August 2010. In this plan the Grove Nursery site is identified for two proposals, OP66 and OP67. OP66 covers 5.9 hectares and is identified for

indoor sports use and is zoned as Green Belt. OP67 is identified as a recycling centre.

In terms of site selection of Grove Nursery, the Transformation Strategy for Waste Management Services which was approved by Council on 13 February 2008 identified the need for a new recycling centre in the west of the city.

Aberdeen City Council has sought to develop a recycling centre in the west of the city for many years; however, no suitable site had been identified at that time. It was clear that there were no locations that did not have potentially adverse impacts. Consequently, in 2009, a site selection process was established by waste management officers, working with colleagues from Asset Management, Planning and Roads and Transportation. Twelve possible sites were assessed against a number of planning, transportation and deliverability criteria. Grove Nursery emerged as the favoured option and the Housing and Environment Committee of 13 April 2010 approved the north-west corner of the site as the preferred site for a recycling centre.

Following the decision of the Housing and Environment Committee, the north-west part of the Grove Nursery was identified in the Proposed Local Development Plan as OP67, an opportunity site for a recycling centre. This covers around 1.5 hectares and is zoned as Policy CF2: New Community Sites and Facilities. This policy states that recycling centres shall be located on easily accessible sites and shall not be detrimental to residential amenity. Policy R4 – Site for New Waste Management Facilities safeguards a number of sites for waste related uses including OP67 Grove Nursery as a recycling centre to serve the west of the city.

Representations on the Proposed Local Development Plan were invited in a 3 month period between late 2010 to early 2011. There was a combined total of 61 representations to the two proposals at Grove Nursery, almost all of which were objections related to the recycling centre. The plan is currently with the Scottish Government and is undergoing examination by Reporters. They are examining the representation made on this and other topics alongside the Council's response to them. It is anticipated that their recommendations will be made available around the New Year.

At the time of completion of this report the Reporter's recommendation on this proposal were not known. However, their recommendations are largely binding on the Council. Once the Reporter's Report into the Examination is received, the Council has 3 months in which to follow adoption procedures. It is anticipated that the Local Development Plan will be adopted in early spring of 2012, at which point it will replace the current 2008 Aberdeen Local Plan. Until this occurs this current application has been rightly considered and dealt with as a Departure to the Development Plan and the procedures required for a departure have been rigorously followed.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The application has been the subject of a screening opinion as required under the provision of Environmental Impact Regulations. The proposal falls within a Schedule 2 development, category 11. – Other Projects (b) Installations for the disposal of waste. The thresholds which require to be taken into account are (i)

where the disposal is by incineration (clearly not applicable in this case) or (ii) the area of development exceeds 0.5 hectare (the application site extends to 1.2hectares) or (iii) the installation is to be sited within 100 metres of any controlled waters (which does not apply in this case)

Therefore the only threshold reached is site area and it should be noted that the actual working area of the HWRC facility is 0.7 hectare in area with the remainder of the site being given over to landscaping. It should also be noted that there is to be no disposal of waste on the site, waste may be technically disposed of by the customers but all waste material will be removed from the site and disposed off and recycled elsewhere.

The development is not within a sensitive area, defined in the regulations as SSSI, land subject to Nature Conservation Orders, International Conservation Sites, World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments or National Parks, none of which apply to Grove Nursery and it has been considered that the development is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Though the screening procedure was undertaken relatively late into the process of consideration of the application this allowed for preliminary evaluation of the impact of the various components of the proposed development to be taken into account and this informed the opinion reached that no EIA was necessary.

Site Drainage

The SUDS arrangements are to be put in place to provide treatment of the surface water runoff from the hard surfaces, both concrete and tarmac, within the site. This will be drained via a hydrocarbon interceptor, to subsurface attenuation units with final flow control on the outlet, limiting flow to the combined sewer. There will be no toxic or hazardous materials in this drainage water, all waste containers within the site are sealed and none of the containers are provided with 'drain holes' to allow polluted water to leak from the contained waste either on to the site or on to the public highway during transfer movements.

The control of waste within the site, including the above details, will be subject to the terms of the Waste Management licence which will be administered by SEPA. It is likely that a requirement of the licence will require removal of all putrescible material from the site within a 24 hour period i.e. all containers containing such material will be removed from the site whether full or not.

SEPA have considered the revised proposed drainage layout as requested in their earlier consultation and note that it is now intended to direct foul and surface water from the development to the public combined sewer at Woodburn Crescent. SEPA has no objection to this arrangement, subject to the full approval of Scottish Water.

Conclusion

It is recognised that this is a controversial application and a site located on the entrance to the largest public park in the city is less than optimal in the eyes of the objectors. However, the layout and operation of the site has been designed to a very high standard such that the site operations will be well screened from external view and have minimal visible effect on the setting of the park. The operation of a HWRC on this site will result in negligible effects on the amenity of

residential property in the vicinity and the traffic consequences are well within the capacity of the local road network.

There are important national initiatives relating to waste treatment which take precedence over the (unlikely) identification of a site which has optimal qualities in all respects. This is an exercise in balancing all the disparate factors and reaching a reasoned conclusion that this site is acceptable for the location and operation of a HWRC as proposed. It is considered that this exercise has been undertaken in an objective manner notwithstanding the emotional content of the many objections.

The plans submitted with the application indicate full details of the layout, development and operation of the site with little recourse to conditions. However, conditions have been added regarding final agreement of landscaping details, external finishes (particularly with reference to the preference for a vertical timber panel clad entrance gate) as this is not specified on the drawings and, to reflect the comments of Env Health, a condition regarding hours of operation such that they cannot be varied without prior approval.. Accordingly and on these terms, approval of this development is being recommended.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to the following conditions

1. that prior to the commencement of the use hereby approved the developers shall submit details of the external treatment of the access gate, the finish to which shall comprise vertical boarded timber - in the interests of visual amenity
2. that, except as the Planning Authority may otherwise agree in writing, the development hereby granted planning permission shall only operate
 - (a) between the hours of 10.00 to 20.00 on weekdays during summer;
 - (b) 9:00 to 20:00 at weekends during summer and
 - (c) winter opening will be 10:00 to 17:00 weekdays and
 - (d) 9:00 to 17:00 at weekends- in the interests of residential amenity.
3. that prior to the commencement of the use hereby authorised the developer shall have undertaken a scheme for the restoration of the dry stone wall along the entire western boundary of the site to the satisfaction of the local planning authority. The dyke shall be repaired using locally sourced stone to match the existing - in the interests of visual amenity.
4. that no development pursuant to the planning permission hereby approved shall be carried out unless there has been submitted to and approved in writing for the purpose by the planning authority a further detailed scheme of landscaping for the site, which scheme shall include indications of all existing trees and landscaped areas on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development, and the proposed areas of tree/shrub planting including details of numbers, densities, locations, species, sizes and stage of maturity at planting - in the interests of the amenity of the area.

5. that all planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved scheme of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting season following the completion of the development and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a size and species similar to those originally required to be planted, or in accordance with such other scheme as may be submitted to and approved in writing for the purpose by the planning authority - in the interests of the amenity of the area.
6. that no development shall take place unless a scheme of all drainage works designed to meet the requirements of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority and thereafter no part of the development shall be occupied unless the drainage has been installed in complete accordance with the said scheme - in order to safeguard water qualities in adjacent watercourses and to ensure that the development can be adequately drained.
7. During the normal operation of the HWRC hereby approved all servicing vehicles shall enter and leave the HWRC by Hazlehead Avenue only unless prior agreement has been reached with this planning authority- in the interests of the safety of all road users.
8. That no development pursuant to the planning permission hereby granted shall take place unless a site specific Noise Mitigation Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Noise Mitigation Plan will, inter alia, detail the design measures to be incorporated into the site to prevent any noise nuisance on the occupants of the nearby residential properties – in the interests of residential amenity.
9. During working hours the HWRC 'rating level' L Aeq(60 minutes), (the specific noise level from the site plus an additional 5dB(A) for tonal characteristics), shall not exceed the Background Noise Level L A90 (60 mins.) at any dwelling greater than 5 dB(A). The HWRC 'rating level' and the Background Noise Level in this condition means the level determined at each property at the time of the survey submitted with this application (Noise Impact Assessment dated December 2011) – in the interests of residential amenity.
10. Following a complaint to the local planning authority relating to noise emissions from the site the applicant shall be required to undertake measurements of the HWRC 'rating level' L Aeq(60 minutes), (the specific noise level from the site plus an additional 5 dB(A) for tonal characteristics). The locations and times of the monitoring shall be determined by and agreed in writing with the local planning authority – in the interests of residential amenity.

REASON FOR DECISION

The extensive and detailed individual studies into this proposal have established that the impact of the development will not result in significant effects on the amenity in the area, either with regard to the setting of Hazlehead Park, to adjacent housing or schools, that the level of traffic is within the design capacity

of Hazlehead Avenue and that neither the solemn environment of the Piper Alpha Memorial nor the Queen Mother Rose Garden will be compromised. Though within Green Belt this site is allocated for a substantial development and should be regarded as a community facility which advances the waste management strategy of the planning authority with provision made in the emerging Local Development Plan.

Dr Margaret Bochel

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.