

**BARFORD ST. MARTIN: PROPOSED SMALL-SCALE COMMUNITY  
COMPOSTING PROJECT AT BARFORD COUNTRYSIDE UNIT,  
DAIRY ROAD, BARFORD ST. MARTIN, FOR ALABARE CHRISTIAN CARE CENTRE  
(Application No. S.06.8011)**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To consider the above application and to recommend that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

**The site**

2. The application site is situated within the Alabare Centre's Countryside Unit, a former dairy within the village of Barford St. Martin, north of the B3089 (Tisbury-Wilton road), Exeter to Salisbury railway and River Nadder. As a former commercial dairy site, all ground surfaces are hard-surfaced with an established access off Dairy Road and areas for parking, turning and storage. The land to the north and west of the site is gently sloping arable farm land with residential housing to the east and south. The site lies within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
3. A location plan is attached at **Appendix 1** and a site plan at **Appendix 2**.

**Planning History**

4. In brief the planning history of the site is as follows:  
  
S/1998/718 In 1998 planning permission was sought by Alabare Christian Care Centre for the Change of Use of an agricultural barn to a furniture repair workshop at the old dairy (current application site). Permission was granted by Salisbury District Council subject to conditions in June 1998.

**Proposals**

5. The application submitted by Alabare Christian Care Centre seeks planning permission to carry out a small-scale community composting facility for waste garden material for the benefit of residents signed up to the scheme in Barford St. Martin, Dinton and Burcombe. The Alabare Christian Care Centre at present provides non-residential countryside skills training for vulnerable adults.
6. The site is roughly rectangular in shape and measures approximately 40 metres x 10 metres with access to the site through the existing Countryside Unit out onto Dairy Road which has a constriction of the full carriageway where it passes under the railway bridge. There is a parking area for approximately 15 cars adjacent to the site that would be available to people bringing material for composting.

7. The communal composting project would be a small-scale scheme with an estimated maximum of 10 vehicles coming to the site daily. The site would be supervised by the Alabare's existing horticultural staff. The proposed hours of opening and operation would be:

Opening hours: 09.30 - 16.00 weekdays

Operating hours: 09.00 - 17.00 weekdays

The site would be closed at weekends.

8. The Barford St. Martin communal composting project would be a small-scale scheme processing an estimated 5-25 tonnes of garden waste annually. Finished compost would be stored temporarily before it is used in the composting site or returned to the local community. The applicant is proposing that the development would have a five year duration, with a view to the project becoming permanent after this time if deemed successful.

### **Planning Policies**

9. The following policies are considered relevant to this application:
- Policies W1 and W3 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 (Adopted April 2006)
  - Policies 6, 9 and 16 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Local Plan 2011 (Adopted March 2005)
  - Policies G1, G2, C4, C10, C11 and CN21 of the Adopted Salisbury District Local Plan 2003

### **Consultations**

10. **Salisbury District Council** – no objection in principle subject to the highway authority and other statutory consultees being satisfied with the proposals and subject to the inclusion of any appropriate conditions recommended.
11. **Salisbury District Council (Environmental Health Officer)** – no observations.
12. **Barford St. Martin Parish Council** – expresses concern regarding the prospect of increased traffic in a narrow road close to a community where there are children. However, notes that the emphasis is placed on the small-scale nature of the project and would therefore like to support the proposal, reserving the right to come back to the planning office if the scale of traffic reaches unacceptable proportions.
13. **Environment Agency** – no objection.
14. **Countryside Section** – requests a revised plan showing the proposed hedging screen and more information with regard to the hardstanding proposed within the application.
15. **County Archaeologist** – no objection.
16. **Local Highway Authority** – no objection.
17. Copies of the consultation replies referred to above are available for inspection in the **Members' Room**.

## **Publicity**

18. The application has been publicised in the local press and by site notices. A neighbour notification exercise was also carried out. Three letters of representation have been received raising the objections and concerns outlined below:
- (i) Hours of operation
  - (ii) Area is not to be seen as industrial site
  - (iii) The disposal of waste from other villages
  - (iv) Vermin
  - (v) Fly-tipping when site is closed
  - (vi) Access road and visibility splays
  - (vii) The running of the existing centre

Copies of the representations received are available in the **Members' Room**.

## **Planning Considerations**

19. This planning application submitted by the Alabare Christian Care Centre proposes the development of a small-scale community composting project for the residents of Barford St. Martin, Dinton and Burcombe.
20. The application must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The main issues to be considered with regard to this application are:-
- Policy
  - Highway access
  - Visual impact
  - Groundwater and surface water protection
  - Hours of operation
  - Noise
  - Pests and vermin

## **Policy**

21. The management and operation of the composting facility would be undertaken by employees of the Barford Countryside Unit, they would check everything is in order and oversee the long-term running of the site. Only biodegradable garden waste would be accepted at the facility. Compost passports would be issued to householders registering to use the composting site. Consequently no waste material would be accepted without a valid compost passport.
22. Policy W1 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 supports the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste. Policy W3 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 considers that the provision of waste management facilities should be within close proximity of the source of waste and contribute towards the waste management needs of the plan area. The composting facility would manage garden waste locally and provide employment. The finished compost produced would be used in the Barford area. The proposal is therefore considered appropriate in terms of Policies W1 and W3 of the Structure Plan 2011.
23. Policy 6 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Local Plan 2011 considers the environmental impact of waste management proposals and Policy 9 promotes development proposals that eliminate, reduce or re-use waste, i.e. the type of proposal being considered here. The environmental impacts of the proposal are considered below in accordance with Policy 6.

### Highway Access

24. A number of adjacent residents have expressed concern regarding the visibility down the road when exiting the Countryside Centre and the constriction on the access road (Dairy Road) under the railway bridge. Barford St. Martin Parish Council also expressed concern regarding the access. Officers note that the application area was formally a commercial dairy. Consequently the site benefits from adequate vehicular access and a significant amount of hardstanding for entering, exiting and unloading. The proposal would not generate a significant amount of vehicle movements. The application quotes a daily average of 2 to 5 loaded vehicles likely to enter the site and 1 to 2 loaded vehicles leaving the site.
25. Officers note that the proposal is for a local community composting project and therefore consider the access, although restricted in part, to be suitable for a low key proposal such as this. The suitability of the location is further enhanced by virtue of the existing large area of hardstanding adjacent to the application site and away from the main highway. The request by the Parish Council to reserve the right to come back to the planning office if the scale of traffic reaches unacceptable proportions is not appropriate. However, the applicant has requested a time limited permission of five years. This period of time would allow the Waste Planning Authority to monitor and assess the development in that location. The local highway authority does not object to the proposal.

### Visual impact

26. The proposal site is located within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The proposed development would be sited behind the Countryside Centre's main building, not visible from the public highway or adjacent residential properties. The applicant has proposed the extension of existing hedging along the western boundary to ensure that the site is screened from views across adjacent farmland and open countryside. The small scale of the development in combination with existing and proposed screening vegetation and the distance from housing suggest that development would have a minimal adverse visual impact on the area. The County Landscape Officer has raised no objections to the proposed development on visual impact grounds. Officers consider that the proposals accord with Policy C4 of the Salisbury District Local Plan (June 2003).

### Groundwater and surface water protection

27. The site lies to the north of the River Nadder. This watercourse is part of the designated River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Consequently the construction of the hardstanding under the compost bays, together with the drainage from the site, would need to be tightly controlled to prevent pollution of the River Nadder.
28. The Environment Agency (EA) does not object to the proposal but makes comments regarding odour, bioaerosols and drainage issues. In accordance with EA guidance, the applicant has carried out a Pollution Risk Assessment for the proposed community composting scheme to assess the potential impact of certain elements of the composting process. The Risk Assessment did not identify a potential for an odour problem detailing that the site staff would follow procedures outlined in the working plan such as ensuring the tarpaulin lids are in place in wet weather and turning the compost regularly to achieve required temperatures and to keep the heaps aerated. If an odour problem were to develop, the compost material and operations management would be investigated.

29. With regard to bioaerosols, the small-scale nature of the proposal indicates that the total quantity of waste being composted at any one time on the site will not exceed the EA threshold of 1,000m<sup>3</sup>. The application proposes that no more than 200m<sup>3</sup>, which is significantly less.
30. The proposed composting operation is small-scale and would utilise wooden bays in which to store the composting material. Aeration of the compost would be achieved by hand turns with a garden fork. This practice is unlikely to generate large amounts of dust. Given the small-scale of the composting operation proposed to be carried out and in light of the applicant's Risk Assessment, officers do not consider that bioaerosols would pose risk to adjoining land users.
31. The site overlies a major aquifer and is in relatively close proximity to the River Nadder SAC. Consequently care needs to be taken to protect the groundwater and surface water on the site. The Countryside Section expressed concern with the specification for the hardstanding and requested that a more robust design be considered. The following specification for the proposed hardstanding has been developed in consultation with the Countryside Section and County Council Engineers:

*150mm compacted sub-base laid on to a compacted sub-grade (earth). Excavated to the formation levels and compact the sub grade thoroughly. The membrane should be at least 500 microns thick and lay within a sand blinding to prevent damage from the sub-base.*

*For ease of construction, the 150mm sub base should be put down in two layers and make 8 passes with 1400 - 1800 kg/m<sup>2</sup> to each layer to ensure that the surface is 'tight'. When the sub-base is thoroughly compacted lay 50mm depth of '6mm down to dust' to provide a smooth wearing course. The pad should be constructed with a suitable cross fall towards the drainage ditch to ensure run-off is collected in times of heavy rainfall.*

Officers consider that a more robust specification for the hardstanding is required in this location for the proposal to accord with Policy C11 of the Salisbury District Local Plan, the implementation of which can be secured by planning condition.

#### Hours of operation

32. A number of adjacent residents expressed concern with regard to the operating hours proposed for the development. One objector stated that the proposed hours exceed those permitted for the original permission for the Countryside Centre. The proposed hours of opening are 09:30 until 16:00 with operating hours between 09:00 until 17:00, with no working at weekends. The previous permission granted by Salisbury District Council for the change of use of the dairy to Countryside Centre in 1998 restricts the use of power tools between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 during the week. Consequently the proposal would not conflict with those hours already permitted. Officers consider that the opening/operating hours are acceptable in light of the fact that the scheme will not be operating at weekends and shortening the hours in the week may encourage fly-tipping, an issue which has also raised concerns from residents.

#### Noise

33. The application states that there are no plans to operate a regular shredding service at the site. It is proposed that any shredding would take place no more than once every six months and would be confined to operating hours after 10:00 using a petrol-powered motor and for a maximum of two hours only. Vehicles using the site would be limited in number and small in size. In light of the above, officers do not consider that the proposal would generate a significant amount of noise.

### Pests and vermin

34. Objection letters from adjacent residents expressed concern that the proposal would attract vermin to the site. The nature of the material, i.e. green waste to be composted, is unlikely to attract pests or vermin foraging for food. As a safeguard the applicant proposes that the compost bay fronts and covers would always be in place when the bays are unattended to prevent the unlikely access of pests. These working practices in conjunction with the type of waste would suggest that the proposed development would not attract vermin to the site.

### Other considerations

#### ***Fly-tipping***

35. The representations submitted by adjacent residents also expressed concern regarding the possibility of fly-tipping at the site when the Countryside Unit is unmanned. The applicant proposes a number of measures to safeguard against this activity. These measures include:
- Securing the boundary and gated entrance to prevent unauthorised access
  - The distribution of leaflets to inform the local community of opening hours and the consequences of fly-tipping
  - The issuing of compost passports to those registered on the scheme

Officers consider that the education of potential users and the securing of the site would help to safeguard the area against fly-tipping out of hours.

### **Conclusion**

36. The application has been considered in accordance with the Development Plan and other material planning considerations.
37. Officers note that the proposal is for a local community composting project and therefore consider the access, although restricted in part, to be suitable for the proposed low-key development.
38. The small scale of the development in combination with existing and proposed screening vegetation and the distance from housing suggest that development would have a minimal adverse visual impact on the AONB and adjacent residents.
39. Officers consider that the design of the composting scheme and the proposed working practices would mitigate for any significant environmental impact.
40. In view of the above it is considered that the proposal accords with the Development Plan with no other overriding planning considerations to warrant refusal.

## **Recommendation**

41. That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

### **Duration**

1. The development hereby granted is for a limited period of five years from the date of this permission.

*Reason: To enable the Waste Planning Authority to review the position at the expiration of the period referred to.*

### **Hours of operation**

2. Operations authorised by this permission shall be limited to between the following hours:

Opening Hours: 09:30 - 16:00 Monday to Friday  
Operating Hours: 09:00 - 17:00 Monday to Friday

No working shall take place at any time on Sunday and Bank or Public holidays.

*Reason: To protect the amenities of local residents and visitors to the area.*

### **Method of working**

3. No material other than green waste (no kitchen waste or animal waste) shall be imported to or composted on the site.

*Reason: To safeguard the amenity of the local area.*

4. No unprocessed green waste shall be stored outside of the reception bin area.

*Reason: To safeguard the amenity of the local area.*

### **Landscaping**

5. Before any operations commence on the site, details of size, species and spacing of shrubs and provenance of species to be planted on the western boundary of the site shall be submitted to and approved by the Waste Planning Authority. Planting shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details. Any trees or shrubs which die within five years of being planted shall be replaced in the next planting season with new stock to the satisfaction of the Waste Planning Authority and maintained for a period of five years.

*Reason: The provision and maintenance of a satisfactory degree of landscaping is considered essential in the interests of visual amenity.*

### Water Protection

6. Prior to commencing operations on site, details of the hardstanding on which the compost bays are to be located shall be submitted to and approved by the Waste Planning Authority. The hardstanding shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: In the interests of land drainage and to ensure that conservation of wildlife habitats.*

### **Informative**

The site overlies a major aquifer as defined by the Environment Agency's 'Policy and Practice for the Protection of Groundwater'. Therefore care needs to be taken to protect the groundwater resource beneath the site. The application proposes the use of a collection sump into which any surface waters will drain. The Environment Agency does not object in principle to this provided it is installed, maintained and managed in line with current best practice. The site operators/developer should ensure that there is no possibility of contaminated water entering groundwater.

### **GEORGE BATTEN**

Director of Environmental Services

Report Author

**MARI WEBSTER**

Senior Planning Officer

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**The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**

Consultation replies and correspondence