

49/2006/016

WESSEX WATER SERVICES LTD

ERECTION OF NEW WATER TREATMENT WORKS AND ASSOCIATED FACILITIES AND DEMOLITION OF PART OF EXISTING WATER TREATMENT WORKS, REGRADING OF GROUND AND LANDSCAPING AT MAUNDOWN WATER TREATMENT WORKS, LANGLEY MARSH, WIVELISCOMBE AS AMENDED BY AGENTS LETTER DATED 21ST APRIL, 2006 AND DRAWING NOS. 2454/15 PL 105 C, 2454/15 PL 106 B, 2454/15 PL 107 B, 2454/15 PL 108 B, 2454/15 PL 109 B, 2454/15 PL 110 B, 2454/15 PL 111 B, 2454/15 PL 112 B, 2454/15 PL 114 B.

306377/129239

FULL

PROPOSAL

The proposal comprises the replacement of the existing water treatment works with new buildings to facilitate the improvement to the quality of water produced, to increase the minimum water production capacity and to replace 'life expired' assets built in the 60's and 70's. The need for proposed improvements have received support from the Drinking Water Inspectorate and is included in the DWI regulatory Programme of work with a completion date of April 2009. The scheme is also supported by OFWAT. The new works are expected to meet demand for drinking water for the next 25 years.

The positioning of the proposed buildings is largely governed by the location of existing infrastructure such as water mains from Clatworthy and Wimbleball reservoirs, existing underground service reservoirs, gravitational flow, space for construction in order that the existing water supply is maintained. The site measures approximately 6.8Ha.

The two largest buildings proposed are the Primary Treatment Building and the Main Treatment Building located to the west of the site. An externally sited generator and fuel store are also proposed. The revised proposal has reduced the number of buildings required and has reduced the footprint of the primary and main treatment buildings.

The main treatment building is characterised by a number of split level 'green roofs', metal clad profiled walls with lower plinth sections incorporating brick and faced concrete. At its maximum dimensions the main treatment building measures 70 m x 51 m and 15 m to the ridge. The majority of the green roof faces south.

The Primary Treatment building is located some 6m to the west of the main building and comprises of a 2 level monopitched "green roof" with profile metal clad walls and faced concrete. The Primary Treatment Building measures 51.5 m x 30 m and 15 m to the highest part of the roof. The majority of the green roof faces east and is cut some 9 – 10 m into the existing bank.

The next building of note is the sludge treatment building located to the east of the site, which measures 22 m x 13 m and some 9 m to the ridge and is constructed using profile metal cladding and a colour coated aluminium roof. The sludge treatment building is also cut into the bank by some 2 m. An existing open tank measuring 8 m x 21 m is proposed to be capped with a concrete slab with a steel prefabricated kiosk measuring 5 m x 3.5 m and has a flat roof at 4 m in height.

Once the new buildings are constructed and are operational, the existing buildings are proposed to be demolished. The construction period is expected to last for some 4 - 5 years and a compound, car park and site offices are also proposed on a temporary basis on fields described as 1 and 2, adjacent to Jews Lane. Field 1 is required by the development to provide additional site area for the new permanent works and a temporary construction area. Field 2 will be required as part of the scheme to provide a temporary site construction access from the main road as the junction with the main road and Jews lane is substandard for this purpose. Spoil from the construction site will be contained in spoil heaps and eventually redistributed over the fields and for the provision of bunding at key landscape zones.

A landscape impact assessment accompanies the application that identifies the sites visual influence within a valley. Public views are identified from the approach from Langley Marsh direction however views are limited from the Maundown approach due to extensive screening. Intermittent views between hedging are found along Jews Lane whereas users of the public footpath on the sites western and north western boundaries can gain clear views. A number of private views from residential properties are also identified. The visual impact is assessed during the temporary construction period and on completion of the development. The construction period is estimated to take some 4 - 5 years with the main visual impact coming from the construction site and spoil heaps in field 1. The temporary access to field 2 is also identified as an area of visual impact due to the removal of some 20 m of existing hedgerow adjacent to the main road. The need for lighting of the construction area is also identified. In conclusion the visual impact of the construction phase is considered minimal due to mounding etc however the impact from the footpath to the west would be significant.

Post construction it is considered that the landscape masterplan would improve upon the existing arrangement with the larger buildings being cut into the rising topography, green roofs and effective bunding and screening. On completion the removal of the temporary works area would greatly reduce the landscape visual impact. As landscaping matures in the medium to long terms the sites landscape impact would be significantly better than at present.

A habitat survey was undertaken that found no internationally or nationally protected species. The survey does however identify that most of the hedgerows on the site were species rich, had the potential to support protected species and are protected under the Hedgerow Regulations. The Hillfarrance Brook is a designated County Wildlife site but is not affected by the development.

An archaeological survey is also included as part of the proposal. Somerset County Council has confirmed that there is little archaeological interest in the existing site as it would have been disturbed during its original construction. Somerset County

Council have confirmed an archaeological interest in fields 1 and 2 and therefore a watching brief will be carried out.

The Highway Assessment identifies the number and type of vehicles attracted to the site and concludes that the new treatment works will not generate any different type of vehicle movements to those currently experienced. Indeed an overall reduction in the amount of lorry movements is predicted. The main traffic movement will therefore be derived during the construction phase. In order to minimise this impact a traffic management plan has been prepared.

An existing public footpath runs along the treatment works west and north west boundaries over a length of approximately 400 m. To facilitate the development the footpath will need to be realigned firstly for a period of 4 - 5 years and then secondly on completion of the project to a similar route to that existing. It is concluded that it is not possible to fully mitigate the visual and noise impact of the construction activities during this phase of the project. Once the footpath is realigned to its permanent route, planting would break up views into the site however views down the valley to Langley Marsh and to the Quantocks will be maintained.

the Flood Risk assessment concludes that the site is not at risk from flooding. A sustainable urban drainage system is described with the 'green roof' itself reducing rainwater run off by 70%.

No chemicals and hazardous materials that are notifiable under The Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations 1992 will be stored on the site.

The Acoustic Assessment concludes that the noise generated by the existing plans will be similar to the noise levels generated by the new works. Noise generated by the construction phase will be limited to hours of working between 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. - 3 p.m. Saturday and 7 a.m. - 3 p.m. Sunday (occasional only).

Work is programmed to start in May 2006, completion of the rebuilding will be 2009 but final landscaping works may continue into 2010. Due to the strategic nature of the treatment works and the requirement to maintain the water supply at all times, the construction, commissioning and decommissioning of the old works can only take place in a pre-determined order. The construction sequence will take place in the following stages:- 1. Site set up and establishment of site access points. 2. Initial cut for buildings and formation of boundary screening. 3. Construction of works. 4. Commissioning of the new works. 5. De-commissioning of the old works, demolition of the old works, structures and roads. 6. Landform fill and ground modelling. 7. Topsoil and planting of screen/planting. 8. Reinstatement of contractors site establishment and all temporary areas.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY from a highway viewpoint the development will generate no more traffic than that which exists and consequently there is no objection to the proposal .My concerns however lie with the amount of traffic that will be generated during the construction phase. The applicants have submitted to the

County Council a statement showing routes to be used by vehicles accessing the site and temporary access provision control. This is acceptable to the Highway Authority. Suitable conditions should therefore be attached to ensure that the developer adheres to these plans during the construction phase in order to minimise the effect on the local highway network. COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGY no objections as no archaeological implications. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY has no objection to the proposal but has the following comments. The agency is in direct contact with the applicant regarding the application for a paragraph 19a exemption for the disposal of waste soils. The applicant is advised to contact the agency direct if any changes to existing Discharge Consents are required. Consideration must be given to any possible impact on groundwater recharge, flows and levels. If detrimental consequences to the water environment are likely, the appropriate mitigation measures and the timescale for implementation must be agreed, prior to works commencing. The applicants should be aware that it is their responsibility to ensure that the development does not adversely affect any existing legal and local water interests in the area. This includes licensed and private abstractions, wells, springs and streams. COUNTY RIGHTS OF WAY the footpath must be diverted under the correct procedure before any work is agreed or goes ahead. SERC the Hillfarrance Brook is identified as a County Wildlife Site. ENGLISH NATURE there are no statutory sites affected by the development and there are no records of any protected species within the site. English Nature should be consulted if any protected species are found. THE RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION relating to the footpath diversion I have no objection however there are two additional styles. If these are absolutely necessary could they be kissing gates or at least squeeze stiles rather than step over styles.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER the proposed buildings and their setting have been well considered in terms of impact on the local landscape. The mitigation proposals should, along with the green roofs, soften the impact sufficiently in the short term to avoid any adverse impacts although the five year construction period will make the site open during the winter months. There should be scope for short term planting and careful positioning of soil heaps to minimise the impact of the worst of the construction operations. The reduction in building footprints should help reduce any landscape impact. NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESERVES OFFICER I had concerns about the lack of evidence in section 9 EIA of the planning support statement having spoken to the ecologist I am satisfied that protected species have been considered. However, with regards to Dormice I advise that we need further information on how the hedgerows will be protected on site throughout the entire development phase both on the temporary works area and the water treatment works site itself. I advise that this should be conditioned if the information is not available prior to determination. FORWARD PLANNING the site lies outside the limits of any settlement so Policy S7 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan applies. The proposal is considered to be broadly consistent with that policy. (The supporting text states that water treatment works will generally be appropriate in the countryside). The proposal is for the improvement of an existing use which provides a public service and which may for various reasons (such as existing infrastructure) be difficult to locate elsewhere. No objections raised. DRAINAGE OFFICER I note surface water disposal is to be via an existing system, however no details of this system are enclosed. This proposal substantially increases the areas of impermeability at the treatment works and any attenuated surface water runoff could

cause downstream flooding. Sustainable Urban Drainage should therefore be used and some site attenuation system should be provided. A condition should therefore be attached to require the latter. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER no observations.

WEST SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL no objection

PARISH COUNCIL supports the proposal. Impressive community consultation.

POLICY CONTEXT

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policies STR1 Sustainable Development, Policy 1 Nature Conservation, Policy 5 Landscape Character, Policy 7 Agricultural Land Policy 39 Transport and Development, Policy 39 Transport and Development, Policy 48 Access and Parking, Policy 49 Transport Requirements of New Development . STR6 Development outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages should be strictly controlled and restricted to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster growth in the need to travel. Policy 19 In rural areas provision should be made for development which creates or enhances local employment, shopping or community facilities, including development necessary for the purposes of agriculture and development associated with the diversification of agricultural units.

Taunton Deane Local Plan S1 General Requirements, S2 Design, S8 Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, M1 - M3 Transport, Access and Circulation Requirements of New Development, EN3 Local Wildlife and Geological Interests, EN5 Protected Species, EN9 Tree Planting, EN26 Water Resources, EN34 Control of External Lighting, S7 Outside defined settlement limits, new building will not be permitted unless it maintains or enhances the environmental quality and landscape character of the area and: (A) is for the purposes of agriculture or forestry; (B) accords with a specific development plan policy or proposal; (C) is necessary to meet a requirement of environmental or other legislation; or (D) supports the vitality and viability of the rural economy in a way which cannot be sited within the defined limits of a settlement. New structures or buildings permitted in accordance with this policy should be designed and sited to minimise landscape impact, be compatible with a rural location and meet the following criteria where practicable: (E) avoid breaking the skyline; (F) make maximum use of existing screening; (G) relate well to existing buildings; and (H) use colours and materials which harmonise with the landscape.

Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas - Paragraph 1(iv) New building development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled; the Government's overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all.

ASSESSMENT

The site lies outside any recognised settlement limits of however, Policy S7 supports the principle of this location where environmental quality is maintained/enhanced and the development could not be located within settlement limits. The accompanying text to Policy S7 specifically states that water treatment works will generally be appropriate in the countryside. The proposal will provide drinking water for the equivalent of 200,000 people that clearly demonstrates the community benefit of the proposed works. The new plant is required to improve the quality of drinking water, meet demand for the next 25 years and that the existing buildings are "life expired" and need to be replaced.

In terms of design, the green roof buildings, that are significantly cut into the topography, represent a unique and ingenious solution to minimising the impact of such large buildings. The design statement states that the buildings are designed to blend in with the landscape rather than create landmark building and together with the proposed landscaping this will certainly be achieved when the development is completed. The roof is planted with a mixture of plug planting of small young plants and hydro planting where a mix of seeds and growing medium are sprayed onto the roof. Once fully established the roof will require little maintenance however it is recommended that 6 monthly checks are made to inspect for bare patches and replace plants.

The main visual impact will be during the 4 - 5 year construction phase with the fields to the west of the existing site being used for spoil heaping, site construction car parking and offices and storage of construction materials. A section of hedgerow will also be removed adjacent to the main highway that leads into Maundown. It should be mentioned at this point however that the construction site and access can be carried out by Wessex Water without the need for Planning Permission due to allowances for statutory undertakers the General Permitted Development Order. The hedgerow to be removed is a section less than 20m in length and therefore does not require consent under the Hedgerow Removal Regulations. The proposal does however include initiatives to reduce the impact of the temporary construction site such as planted bunding, limited hours of operation and a traffic management plan and initial planting in the first planting season.

Turning to the traffic impact of the development the new treatment works will attract less lorry movements than the existing works. The main impact will be from construction traffic which will be minimised by the traffic management plan that includes directional signs, restriction to HGV routes only and the reduction of speed limits. Also proposed is the restriction of large vehicle movements to outside key school activity times, i.e. 8.20 a.m. – 9.00 a.m. and 2.45 p.m. – 3.45 p.m. The main noise contributor will be traffic associated with the construction phase however overall hours of operation will be limited to reasonable times.

The existing footpath that runs along the west border will be temporarily diverted around the field boundary with Jews Lane and then realigned in a similar position and route as existing. The County Rights of Way department have agreed in principle to the changes to the footpath.

In terms of drainage again the main impact is from rainwater runoff from the construction site. A detailed Sustainable Urban Drainage system has been designed

to minimise flows into the Hillfarrance Brook to those expected of a normal greenfield. These measures include a network of ditches, culverts, reed beds and attenuation ponds. The surface water runoff created by the treatment works buildings will be less than existing as the green roof captures 70% of runoff.

It appears that there are no protected species on the site although the network of important hedgerows is identified as a suitable habitat for protected species. A condition is therefore proposed to provide a 2m buffer adjacent to the hedgerows. The small section of hedgerow to be removed will be replanted on completion. There is limited archaeological interest although a watching brief will be undertaken.

In conclusion the construction site will have a landscape impact. However, the works are considered essential for the continued supply to 200,000 people. Nevertheless the applicants have proposed extensive measures to minimise the visual impact of the development. In terms of the finished water treatment works the visual and traffic impact will be less than the existing site.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, materials, phased landscaping, buffer zones for hedges, traffic management plan as submitted, surface water drainage measures as submitted, archaeological watching brief, reinstatement of contractors site and all temporary areas, implementation and maintenance of green sedum roofs, recommendations of the flood risk assessment and no works outside 7 a.m. – 7 a.m. Monday - Saturday and no works on Sunday or public/bank holidays.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The principle of the development outside defined settlement limits is considered acceptable and the proposal is considered not to harm visual or residential amenity and is therefore considered acceptable and, accordingly, does not conflict with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, S2 and S7.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

CONTACT OFFICER: 356469 MR R UPTON

NOTES: