

PROPOSED WASTE TRANSFER STATION AT OLD COAL DEPOT -  
SUMMARY LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL TECHNICAL NOTE



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## 1 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF REPORT

### 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This summary landscape and visual technical note relates to the potential effects resulting from the proposed waste transfer station at Old Coal Depot, Hillingdon.
- 1.1.2 This technical note has been prepared by Chartered Landscape Architects at Felstone Consulting Limited, a Registered Practice with the Landscape Institute.
- 1.1.3 Please refer to the Planning Statement which describes the development proposal in detail.
- 1.1.4 This technical note is divided into the following sections:
- Desk-based review of local context and nearby visual receptors; and
  - Potential changes to local landscape character, views and visual amenity.
- 1.1.5 This technical note takes account of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (hereafter referred to as “GLVIA 3”):
- Paragraph 5.1 of GLVIA3 describes how landscape effects are concerned with “*how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and its distinctive character*”.
  - Paragraph 6.1 of GLVIA3 describes how visual effects are concerned with “*assessing how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the content and character of views as a result of the change or loss of existing elements of the landscape and/or introduction of new elements*”.
- 1.1.6 Potential landscape and visual effects are described separately, although where relevant and appropriate, cross references are made to the same features or elements.

## **2 LOCAL LANDSCAPE CONTEXT AND VISUAL RECEPTORS**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 This description of local landscape context and nearby visual receptors is based on a desktop study of the relevant publications, maps and plans relating to the area within which the proposed development would occur (including the London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan, OS Explorer map and Google Earth Pro).

### **2.2 Landscape Planning Context**

- 2.2.1 Details of the relevant planning policy context are contained in the Planning Statement that accompanies the planning application. The relevant landscape-related policies are summarised below.
- 2.2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that planning policies and decisions ensure development is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (para 130) and protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (para 174).
- 2.2.3 The London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan Part 1 - Strategic Policies (Adopted November 2012) includes minimising harmful impacts on landscape, as part of its ambitions for an attractive and sustainable borough. Policy HE1 refers to conserving and enhancing Hillingdon's distinct and varied environment, its settings and the wider historic landscape. Policy BE1 refers to how new developments should be designed to be appropriate to the identity and context of Hillingdon's buildings, townscapes, landscapes and views, and make a positive contribution to the local area in terms of layout, form, scale and materials and seek to protect the amenity of surrounding land and buildings, particularly residential properties.

### **2.3 Landscape Designations**

- 2.3.1 The London Borough of Hillingdon, Local Plan Part 2 – Policies Map identifies the site as part of Site Allocations, Mineral and Transport Designations Policy SA 37: Former Coal Depot. This allocation states that “*the Council will support proposals for mixed use*

*development that capitalises on the proximity of the Crossrail station and promotes regeneration in Yiewsley Town Centre.”*

- 2.3.2 Key development principles for site allocation Policy SA 37 includes that one third of the site should accommodate residential development, with a portion to be B1 office and SME workshops (subject to demand) that do not detract from residential uses.
- 2.3.3 The site allocation Policy SA 37 is 6.35ha, whereas the application site for the waste transfer station is 0.6ha and is a temporary development of 5 years in duration. Consequently, the aspiration for mixed use development with residential component would not be comprised, as a result of the proposed development.
- 2.3.4 The boundary of Colne Valley Park and Green Belt is located immediately to the north of the site, along with Nature Conservation Sites of Metropolitan or Borough Grade I Importance to the north and east. The edge of an Area of Special Local Character (Garden City, West Drayton – residential area) is located c50m to the south of the site access, south of the railway line.
- 2.3.5 There are Listed Buildings to the east of the site entrance, including The Railway Arms Public House (Grade II) and the De Burgh Public House (Grade II) and the Offices of the Valentine Varnish and Lacquer Company (Grade II), which is located to the south.

## **2.4 Published Character Assessments**

- 2.4.1 The site is located within National Character Area 115 Thames Valley, which is described in the summary as:
- *“a mainly low-lying, wedge-shaped area, widening from Reading, which includes Slough, Windsor, the Colne Valley and the southwest London fringes. The River Thames provides a unifying feature through a very diverse landscape of urban and suburban settlements, infrastructure networks, fragmented agricultural land, historic parks, commons, woodland, reservoirs and extensive minerals workings.”*
- 2.4.2 The Hillingdon Townscape Character Study (Allies and Morrison, Nov 2013) identified the site as located on the boundary between the *“Colne Valley corridor - defining a clear western edge to the borough dominated by canal, rivers and larger bodies of water.”*, and the *“Canal corridor – Industrial development following the Grand Union Canal and*

*the focus for significant growth and change.”*. This document also included a reference in Figure 6 to the Hillingdon Landscape Character Assessment (Land use Consultants) which identified the site within an area of *“Inter-war Suburb / Metroland”*.

## **2.5 Landscape Elements and Features**

2.5.1 The existing site includes hardstanding and roadways, associated with the former Coal Depot and the access road extends to the public highway at Tavistock Road. There are several storage containers and skips on the main site, with concrete uprights / walling.

2.5.2 The site is located within a built-up predominately urban area, with the following elements and features adjacent:

- There are two large industrial buildings immediately to the south of the site (measuring 33m x 26m x c9m high and 22m x 11m x c5m high), with hardstanding extending up to the railway line (with 8m high gantries). The residential development along Fairway Avenue lies beyond the railway at c120m away from the main site (with dwellings typically over 8m high);
- A belt of vegetation extends along the northern site boundary, adjacent to the disused railway line, with areas of hardstanding and a scattered pattern of buildings associated with Marshalls Yard and Meadows Cabins Container Storage beyond (typically up to 4-5m high). Beeches Way follows along Trout Lane at c150m to the north;
- Hardstanding extends for over 100m to the east of the main site, up to a belt of vegetation (12-16m high) along the railway line and Frays River. The residential development along Tavistock Road lies beyond the river at 140m away from the main site (with dwellings typically up to 8m high), with Yiewsley settlement and High Street further east; and
- Hardstanding and roadways (with storage containers, etc) extends for over 200m to the west, up to a belt of vegetation adjacent to the disused railway line. Beyond this point there is additional vegetation alongside the Thorney Weir Fishing Club Lake and River Colne. The Colne Valley Trail passes through this area.

2.5.3 The topography within the site is generally flat at c30m AOD and part of the broader

river valley basin area which ranges in elevations from c24-27m AOD.

## **2.6 Aesthetic and Perceptual Characteristics**

- 2.6.1 The existing site is medium scale (expanse of hardstanding, with storage containers), set within a broader landscape which is also of medium scale (characterised by additional hardstanding, urban areas, railway lines and watercourse corridors, waterbodies and vegetation belts and blocks).
- 2.6.2 The combination of flat valley topography, vegetation belts and built forms provide a high degree of enclosure, with openness concentrated around the waterbodies and along infrastructure corridors.
- 2.6.3 The built forms within the local area (buildings and gantries) have vertical and straight lines, with vegetation providing further vertical elements, typically positioned along linear infrastructure, roads and watercourses.
- 2.6.4 The existing site has a moderate complexity, due to the combination of hardstanding, containers and vehicles, materials, textures and colours. The developed land to the east, north and south are also of moderate complexity, whilst the waterbodies and vegetation within the Colne Valley Park to the west are simpler, with muted greens and browns.
- 2.6.5 The Colne Valley Park has a more tranquil character than the site and the built-up areas to the north, east and south.

## **2.7 Overall Landscape Character**

- 2.7.1 The analysis of existing landscape attributes has concluded that the existing site, its local setting and wider study area is generally consistent with the key characteristics in the aforementioned published assessments and in particular National Character Area 115 Thames Valley and its diverse landscape of urban and suburban settlement, infrastructure networks, vegetation and waterbodies.

## **2.8 Landscape Value**

- 2.8.1 The existing site is of relatively low landscape value overall due to the following:
  - The site has little to no natural heritage interest, being hardstanding, roadways and

containers on the former Coal Depot;

- The site has no historical or cultural interest which contributes positively to the landscape and is developed land; and
- The site is not particularly distinctive, is of low scenic quality and not particularly tranquil or wild.

## **2.9 Views and visibility**

2.9.1 The site has very limited visibility, due to its flat valley topography, vegetation belts and built forms around the boundaries and surrounding areas.

2.9.2 The nearest potential visual receptors include the following:

- inhabitants of settlements and local residents within individual properties, such as on the edge of Yiewsley (along Tavistock Road) to the east and 'Garden City, West Drayton' (along Fairway Avenue) to the south;
- users of the local road network such as along Tavistock Road to the east, Fairway Avenue to the south and Trout Road to the north;
- travellers along railway line to the south; and
- users of the Public Rights of Way around the application site, including Colne Valley Way to the west and Beeches Way to the north.



### **3 POTENTIAL CHANGES TO LANDSCAPE CHARACTER, VIEWS AND VISUAL AMENITY**

#### **3.1 Development Proposals**

3.1.1 The following items have been examined due to their specific landscape and visual implications:

- a new main building, 30m by 30m, 10m to eaves and 11.5m to ridge. Materials to consist of grey cladding to roof and wall panels, with an open front to the south;
- site office to be a shipping container 12m x 3m and typically less than 3m high positioned in south-east corner;
- vehicle parking and skip storage positioned in south-west corner; and
- use of existing access road, extending to the south-east and onto Tavistock Road.

3.1.2 In addition, the proposed development would be temporary in nature and for a period of 5 years, which is short-term duration and reversible (in accordance with GLVIA3 which refers to effects that last for less than 5 years as short-term).

#### **3.2 Potential Changes to Landscape Character**

3.2.1 There would be no perceptible change to National Character Area 115 Thames Valley. The proposed development would be positioned within an existing built-up area and form part of the diverse settled landscape.

3.2.2 The development would assimilate with the local Hillingdon Townscape Character and its location on the boundary between the “Colne Valley corridor” and the “Canal corridor”.

3.2.3 At a local scale, although the new building would be slightly higher than the existing building to the south (c2m), it would have a similar overall footprint. It would also be temporary and short-term in duration. The container storage and vehicle movements would be similar to existing.

3.2.4 Overall, the potential changes to landscape character would be limited and consistent with existing characteristics.

### **3.3 Potential Changes to Views and Visual Amenity**

- 3.3.1 There would be very limited visibility of the proposed development, due to the dimensions of the building, its position within an areas with a flat valley topography, as well as vegetation belts and built forms around the boundaries and surrounding areas.
- 3.3.2 There would be little to no visibility of the proposals for inhabitants of Yiewsley to the east due to the distances away, broad and generally flat topography and intervening vegetation and buildings.
- 3.3.3 There would be little to no visibility of the proposals for inhabitants of ‘Garden City, West Drayton’ (along Fairway Avenue) to the south due to the distances away, broad topography and intervening vegetation and buildings.
- 3.3.4 It is not anticipated that users of the local road network such as Tavistock Road to the east, Fairway Avenue to the south or Trout Road to the north would notice the proposed development due to the distances away, intervening vegetation and buildings, as well as direction of travel and travellers being focused on the route corridors.
- 3.3.5 It is not anticipated that users of the railway line to the south would notice the proposed development due to the distances away and transient nature of passers-by, as well as intervening vegetation and existing built-up local context.
- 3.3.6 Users of the Colne Valley Way to the west and Beeches Way to the north would have views mostly obscured by the existing vegetation along the routes as they pass closest to the site. Localised open views may be possible from short sections, although the development would be set down, with lower parts hidden. As such little to no change is anticipated to views and visual amenity as a result of the proposed development. For much of these routes, recreational travellers will be focused on the wider Thames Valley landscape, with its diverse range of urban and suburban elements.

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