

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App Nos: 201269/DEM

Address: Gas Holder Alexander Turner Close Reading, RG1 3EA

Proposals: Application for prior notification of proposed demolition of gas holder and ancillary structures

Case Officer: Matt Burns

Applicant: Danescroft (Kenavon Drive Project Management) LLP

Date received (valid from): 8 September 2020

Target Decision date: 6 October 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

The site comprises the large gas holder structure and ancillary buildings and is accessed via a single entry point from Alexander Turner Close to the west. The site is owned and operated by Southern Gas Network (SGN), however the Gas Holder has been taken out of service and is no longer in use. The Gas Holder occupies the majority of the site but the ancillary buildings and hardstanding remain in use as a depot for SGN, where vehicles and materials are stored.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The application is Prior Notification under Part 11, Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (“the GPDO”).

- Application Form
- Site Notice
- Site Location Plan ref. 16035 P0-001
- Scope of Works Plan ref. HD/Reading 4/01

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 8th September 2020

- Robinson & Birdsell Limited Demolition Method Statement ref. MS/001/TENDER/A rev F dated 7th January 2021.
- Appendix A - Site Layout Plan ref. DRG/1422/01 Rev A
- Appendix B - Greenspace Ecological Solutions Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement ref. J20563_Arb_Rev_B
- Appendix C - Dismantling Sequence Stages 1 to 4 ref. DRG /1422 /04) Rev A
- Appendix D - Crane Lifting Plan ref. Ref: Lifting Plan (Tender) SGN Reading Gasholder No4
- Appendix E - Lifting Plan and Water Tower Dismantling ref. DRG / 1422 /05 Rev A
- Appendix F - WSP Peregrine Flacon Perch specification ref. Technical Specification SGN Reading - Brid Mast Specification 70070233
- Appendix G - Robinson & Birdsell Limited Traffic Management Plan ref. TMP/Tender/MS Rev A
- Appendix H - Stuart Michael Associates Tipper Tracker Plan ref. 5757.SK08 Rev A Autotrack Swept Paths Rigid Construction Vehicle
- Appendix I - Robinson & Birdsell Limited Outline Tender Air Quality, Noise and Vibration Control and Monitoring Approach ref. MS/EMP/Tender/MS
- Appendix J - Management of Contamination (Water & Sludge) ref. GH No4

- Appendix K - Section 80 Demolition Notice
- Appendix L - Greenspace Ecological Solutions Preliminary Ecological Appraisal ref. J20563_Rev B (April 2019) and Addendum Letter ref. J20563_P5_Reading SGN Gas Holder Site uPEA dated 26th October 2020

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 14th January 2021

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

190627FUL - Demolition of existing buildings and Gas Holder and the erection of new buildings ranging between 2 and 9 storeys in height, providing 130 residential units (Class C3) with associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space - Planning Committee resolution to grant on 13. 11.2019 subject to s106 - decision notice not yet issued.

4. CONSULTATIONS

RBC Transport

Revisions to the demolition method statements to address the following:

- i. It should be stated that no loading / unloading or parking of any construction vehicles take place on the surrounding road network.
- ii. Details of the size of vehicles that would serve the site during the demolition works. If any vehicle larger than a refuse vehicle is to be used tracking will be required to ensure vehicles can access and egress the site. There may also be a requirement for traffic management to be agreed with the adjacent land owner initially and potentially the Highway Authority if the road network is to be adopted during the demolition period - this should be clarified and stated within the method statement.
- iii. A condition survey throughout the adjacent development is required to the junction of Kenavon Drive and Gas Work Road to ascertain whether any damage to the area has occurred during the demolition works. It should be stated within the method statement that this will be carried out and details of what the survey would entail. It should also be stated that any damage would be rectified by the applicant with agreement by the adjacent landowner and potentially the Highway Authority should the road network be adopted during the demolition period.

RBC Environmental Protection

Revisions to the demolition method statement to address the following:

- i. Contaminated Land

The land is on the site of an historic gas works which has the potential to have caused contaminated land. There is the potential for any contamination present to be spread during the demolition works, either in the form of dust or mud. It is therefore important due to the significance of the demolition works, for a risk assessment to be carried out and measures put in place to prevent the spread of any contamination. This should refer to a contaminated land assessment of the site.

The demolition method statement must include a detailed scheme for the management of contamination during the demolition works. This scheme must be written by a competent qualified person and include management of contaminated sludge, mud and dust to control their spread and prevent impacts on human health and the environment, during the demolition, storage on site and subsequent disposal. The scheme should be informed by and refer to a contaminated land risk assessment of the site and shall make reference to the IAQM guidance on the assessment of dust from demolition and construction.

ii. Noise and Dust

There are concerns about potential noise, dust and bonfires associated with the demolition works and possible adverse air quality and amenity impacts on nearby residents (and businesses), including the nearby school. The submitted statement makes general reference to measures for control of noise and dust but the information provided is vague and specific processes and mitigation measures should be stated.

It should be stated that there would be no fires or burning of waste on site.

Details of the on-site measures proposed for control of dust, dirt and other airborne pollutants during the demolition works are required - this should include a dust monitoring program including proposed locations for monitoring, proposed dust limits and triggers for dust mitigation measures.

Details of measures proposed for control of noise coming from the site during the demolition works are required - this should include what noise/vibration limits will be adhered to and how will this be monitored/controlled, what monitoring program will be used, where will monitoring stations be located, what are the proposed working and delivery hours and details of vehicle reversing alarm details.

Details of pest control measure and where necessary capping of drains/sewers and baiting arrangements are required.

It should be stated how the noise/dust/contamination measure proposed have taken into account the ongoing Covid19 epidemic with nearby residents likely to be spending more time in and around their homes/gardens. What additional measures are proposed to address this?

The submitted method statement also refers to works to be carried out in accordance with an environmental management plan but this document has not been submitted with the application and should be provided.

RBC Natural Environment

Revisions to the demolition method statements to address the following:

A plan is required to show the tree protection zones and method of protection for all trees on and adjacent to the site. This plan should be referred to within the method statement and it should be stated that the tree protection measures shown shall be installed prior to the commencement of any demolition works and retained in situ for the duration of the works.

RBC Ecology

Revisions to the demolition method statement to address the following:

The Greenspace Ecological Solutions Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (October 2018) report submitted with the application alongside the demolition method statement is two years old. Conditions at the site may have changed and therefore an updated report is required to be provided including an updated bat and nesting bird assessment.

Berkshire Archaeology

Revisions to the demolition method statements to address the following:

It should be stated that a formal photographic archive of the gas holder will be deposited with a suitable digital repository prior to commencement of any demolition works.

Building Control

Revisions to the demolition method statements to address the following:

The applicant should be made aware that they will be required to submit a demolition notice under section 80 of the Building Act for intended demolition six weeks prior to demolition of the structure. Reference to this should be made with the demolition method statement.

Public Consultation

Applications for prior notification under part 11 of the General Permitted Development Order are not subject to public consultation. Notwithstanding this a site notice setting out that an application for prior notification for the demolitions works was displayed at the site by the Applicant.

8 letters of objection have been received raising the following matters:

- Demolition works should not be carried out during a pandemic, particularly when people are stuck in their homes
- Noise impact of the works
- Spread of dust and potential contaminants to the surrounding area
- Vibration impacts of the works - building survey area proposed by the applicant should be expanded
- Impact on nesting birds within the site
- Has a full archaeological photographic survey of the gas holder been undertaken
- Inadequate noise, dust, vibration mitigation measures proposed

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

Part 11, Schedule 2 of the GPDO requires the works to be carried out in accordance with the submitted details where it is determined that Prior Approval is not required.

The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Local Plan 2019

Policy CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC2 Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy CC5 Waste Minimisation

Policy CC7 Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8 Safeguarding Amenity

Policy TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy

Policy TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters

Policy EN15 Air Quality

Policy EN16 Pollution and Water Resources

Policy EN12 Biodiversity and The Green Network

Policy EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodland

5. APPRAISAL

Assessment

The principle of the loss of the existing gas holder structure and ancillary buildings has already been established under planning application 190627.

Under Part 11, the Local Planning Authority is only able to control the method of demolition and the restoration of the site. It is not able to resist the demolition for other reasons.

The details submitted initially with the application in respect of the method of demolition were considered insufficient for the reasons set out in the consultations section above. Based on this the LPA issued its initial decision on the application on 5th October 2020 which confirmed that Prior approval was required for the demolition works and that prior approval not given at the time for the reasons set out.

Following notification that prior approval was required on 5th October 2020 additional information has been submitted by the Applicant.

In summary the following amendments and additional information has been submitted:

Site Working/Deliveries Hours

- No construction, Demolition or associated deliveries shall take place outside of the following Hours:
 - Mondays to Fridays 0800hrs to 1800hrs and Saturdays 0800hrs to 1300hrs.
 - No deliveries shall take place on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays without further prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority.
- Notification letter to be sent to surrounding properties by the site contractor setting out programme of works and point of contact details

RBC Environmental Protection - No objection subject to the above.

Transport/Highways (Traffic Management Plan submitted)

- All loading and unloading of construction vehicles will be confined within the SGN inner site boundary fence line
- No parking of vehicles will be permitted on adjacent roads near the Gasholder site throughout the duration of the demolition project
- Tracker diagram provided confirming delivery vehicles can enter and exit site in forward gear (no reversing on road necessary)
- Only single access route to site possible via Robert Parker Road
- No vehicles other than a roll-on off skip wagon (10m long) will be used for the transportation of scrap metal off-site. The exception to this will be the delivery of demolition plant, where the use of a larger low loading wagon will be necessary which would be at the start and finish of the works. Separate movement order licenses would need to be secured by the Applicant from the Police and Highway Authority for the low loader deliveries separate to this application.
- Undertaking of road condition survey and rectification by the applicant of any damage caused by vehicle movements associated with the demolition works
- Vehicles movements to and from site to be restricted to before 0915 and after 1500 where possible
- Speed limit of 5mph

RBC Transport - No objection subject to the above.

Environmental Protection

- No breaking of ground exercises to be undertaken. Demolition work to be restricted to dismantling of above ground structures only down to the existing concrete slab level across site. Concrete slab level not be broken and would be retained in situ
- Dust suppression spray system to be provided across site
- Step by step demolition process of gas holder structure provided including procedures for removal of sludge from within the gas holder inner tank
- Noise, dust and vibration monitoring equipment will be placed on site (acceptable levels have been agreed with Environmental Protection Officer). If set levels are exceeded then site manager alerted and mitigation measures triggered. Impacts are predicted to be low.
- Offsite incidents as a result of the works to be rectified by contractor (eg. Road sweeping, cleaning)

RBC Environmental Protection - No objection subject to the above.

Trees

- Implementation of tree protection measures for existing on-site trees (measures to be implemented are as approved under planning application 190627 for redevelopment of the site for residential)

RBC Natural Environment - No objection subject to the above.

Ecology

- Updated ecological survey of the site has been undertaken (further to that agreed under planning application 190627) and no new constraints identified.
- Temporary falcon perch to be installed prior to demolition of gas holder structure (as per planning application 190627)

- Vegetation clearance to be undertaken outside of bird nesting season (end of Feb to August). If not achievable mitigation set out in ecological report to be followed.

RBC Ecologist - No objection subject to the above.

Archaeology

- Formal photographic record of the gas holder to be deposited with the Archaeological Data Survey prior to demolition works starting.
- Cast iron column dating back to 1887 (referred to within planning application 190627) to be safely uplifted and stored until its incorporation with the proposed redevelopment of the site.

Berkshire Archaeology - No objection subject to the above.

Building Control

- Confirmation that section 80 building demolition notice will be sought

Restoration of Site

- No breaking of ground proposed - above ground dismantling of gas holder structure and ancillary buildings only. Site to be retained as current hardstanding depot.

Representations Received

Part 11 of the GPDO only allows the LPA to consider the method of demolition and is not able to resist the demolition for other reasons. Therefore it would not be reasonable for the LPA to resist demolition on the basis of the ongoing covid19 situation alone, but through the amendments to the method statement received since the application was first submitted on 5th October 2020 the LPA have worked to ensure that the demolition works can be carried out in as safe and appropriate manner as possible.

The amended demolition method statement submitted is considered to satisfactorily address the other matters raised in representation.

Equality Act

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the current applications) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.

Conclusion

The proposed method of demolition of the site is considered to be acceptable on this basis of the amended information submitted.

Recommendation

PRIOR APPROVAL REQUIRED

PRIOR APPROVAL IS GIVEN