

Planning Application Statement Otterburn Depot

Strategic Importance of Location

The location of the Otterburn Highways Depot gives direct access onto the A696 and the A68, these roads are a priority route to Scotland. Important priority routes need to be kept open during adverse weather conditions.

The gritting routes covered from the depot include two 800ft plus routes and one 1000ft plus route. These high ground routes often need to be treated more frequently than other sections of the road network during winter..

Historically the depots are sited in strategic locations for the following reasons;

- Direct access to main roads (priority routes).
- Within a reasonable distance of the gritting route to enable timely reloading of the gritters.
- To provide welfare facilities, hot food and drinks and a place of safety for the gritting crews.
- During periods of prolonged snowfall crews are stationed at the depots.
- Crews need to travel to the depots before the roads are treated.
- Salt delivery wagons are large and need good access from main roads.

Alternative Locations

Northumberland County Council looked at two options for the possibility of delivering “Winter Services” from an alternative location to Otterburn Depot, the proposals and reasons against relocation are;

Option (1) Proposal to relocate to Council owned land outside of Otterburn village.

- No suitable Council owned land within a reasonable distance of the A696 and the A68.
- No suitable Council owned land near Electricity Power network or mains water supply.
- No suitable Council owned land identified for the provision of welfare facilities and a place of safety for the gritting crews.

Option (2) Proposal to combine the Winter Services operation and deliver the road gritting and snow ploughing from Bellingham Highways Depot.

- The high route (B6320 road) between Otterburn and Bellingham is exposed and blocks with snow quite easily making access to Otterburn and the A696 and A68 impossible.
- The crews need to get to the depots sometimes in rough weather to start gritting.
- Increased salt storage would be required at Bellingham depot and the depot has limited space.

In addition to the above proposals, the Forestry Commission and the MOD were contacted regarding suitable alternative sites, without success.

Storage of rock salt

Salt can seep into ground water affecting human, animal, and vegetation health.

Salt in ponds, lakes and freshwater has detrimental effects on the growth, reproduction and survival of a large range of invertebrates, fish and amphibians.

If salt is stored under cover the moisture content can be controlled resulting in more efficient treatments, and less salt being spread on the roads and therefore a less detrimental impact on the environment.

It is widely recognised in the relevant Codes of Practice that in order to achieve compliance, it is necessary to maintain and control the moisture content of de-icing salt. Salt storage under cover is proven to be the best control option.

Currently road salt stored at Otterburn remains uncovered and results in salts having a high moisture content reducing its efficiency when used for road gritting purposes.

External storage of salt combined weather conditions results in 'leaching' where >10% of the uncovered salt stock is washed away.

Barn Options Explored

Further to withdrawing the 2016 planning application and considering alternative solutions a decision was made to change from a rectangular type barn to a dome type barn because it would give more flexibility to move the location of the barn away from the residential properties surrounding the site.

The rectangular type barn has a footprint of approximately 900m² as opposed to the dome type barn which has a footprint of 615m². The smaller footprint of the dome type barn will allow the location of the barn to be moved closer to the access road and further away from the residential properties.

Lighting

As part of the proposed works the existing floodlighting will be replaced with modern LED lighting and PIR and switch-off timers. Illumination will also be confined to the working area within the depot.

Bleepers on vehicles

Vehicles will also be fitted with "White Sound" reversing and warning alarms. The sound from these alarms subsides quickly outside of the danger zone, meaning the alarms do not cause noise nuisance.

Landscaping and planting

Additional landscaping and tree planting will also be carried out along the roadside and along the

boundaries of the depot.

Materials of the Dome type Salt Barn

In order to make the barn blend in with the natural surroundings green roofing materials will be used, the concrete sidewalls will also be covered with timber cladding.