

Originator: David Newbury

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## Report of the Chief Planning Officer

PLANS PANEL EAST

Date 17<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Subject: APPLICATION 23/312/04/FU – REPLACEMENT FILTERS TO STORAGE SILOS AT KALON LIMITED, WIDE LANE, MORLEY

APPLICANT
Kalon Ltd

DATE VALID
20<sup>th</sup> May 2004

TARGET DATE
15<sup>th</sup> July 2004

Electoral Wards Affected:
Morley South

Specific Implications For:
Equality and Diversity
Community Cohesion
Narrowing the Gap

# **RECOMMENDATION: GRANT PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:**

1. The reverse jet filters shall only be operated between the hours of 0730 and 1800 hours Monday to Friday and 8.00 hours to 12.00 hours on Saturdays and the filters shall not operate outside of these hours.

In the interests of the amenity of the occupiers of nearby premises.

2. The level of noise emitted from the reverse jet filters shall not exceed 56dBL<sub>Amax</sub> fast between 730 hours and 1800 hours Monday to Friday and 800 hours to 1200 hours on Saturdays (and the filters shall not operate outside of these hours) as measured on the northern boundary of the site at point 'C' (that being 2m inside the boundary and at a height of 1.5m above ground level) as identified on "Figure 2 Site Layout" in the Noise & Vibration Management Limited letter to PPG Architectural Coatings UK dated 16<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

In the interests of the amenity of the occupiers of nearby premises.

**Reasons for approval:** The application is considered to comply with Policy GP5 of the Unitary Development Plan in that it facilitates economic growth whilst not causing harm to the character and visual amenities of the area and the amenities of people who live and work in the vicinity of the application site.

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 Consideration of this planning application was deferred at the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2011 Plans Panel so that further noise readings could be undertaken by the Council. A Members site visit was undertaken on the morning of that Panel. Shortly before this Panel meeting an objection to the planning application was received from the owner of the neighbouring site, Mr Snee. The neighbouring site contains commercial and residential premises. Mr Snee had previously been satisfied with the recommendation before the Plans Panel as he considered that the Reverse Jet Filters (RJF's) were operating at a noise level that was acceptable to him. However, Mr Snee then raised a concern that the noise limit set out in the suggested condition No. 2 was too high and would allow the RJF's to operate at a significantly higher noise level than when they were operational in 2005. At this time he states that no noise attenuation measures were in place. A complete summary of Mr Snee's comments in respect of the planning application are set out at section 6.0 of this report.
- As a consequence further noise readings have now been undertaken and these were carried out by an officer from the Council's Noise and Environmental Protection team. The readings show the RJF's to be operating at a range of 52-53dBL<sub>Amax</sub>. It is considered that this noise level is insignificant when compared to background noise levels. The noise limit setout in condition 2 above reflects the readings taken by the Council. The applicant and Mr Snee have both stated that they are content with the condition as now worded.
- 1.4 Planning permission was granted for this development in October 2005 but the decision was subject to legal challenge (Judicial Review). The High Court quashed the decision to grant planning permission and referred the planning application back to the City Council for determination. The basis for the High Court decision was that a condition imposed on the planning permission that required details of noise attenuation measures to the filters to be submitted and approved by the local planning authority was not lawful. This was because there was no evidence before the Council to show how and to what level noise could be reduced.
- 1.5 Since that time there has been a lengthy period of negotiation with the applicant and legal consultation. Noise readings have been undertaken the results of which show that the RJF's can be operated at noise levels that will not cause undue harm to the amenities of people who live and work nearby. Members will see that it is recommended that a condition (condition 2 above) be attached to the planning permission that limits the noise level when measured at the boundary of the site.

#### 2.0 PROPOSAL:

2.1 Permission is sought for the retention of four dust filters (Reverse Jet Filters) that have been fitted to the top of four existing silos and are approximately 1.55m in height. The silos are in excess of 16m in height and are located on the western part of the application site 15m from the common boundary with Rods Mills.

#### 3.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

3.1 The application relates to an existing paint factory and in particular four existing storage silos. There are existing offices at Rods Mills ('Technoprint') situated 25m to the north west of the silos and an existing dwelling ('Croft House') which is a Grade II Listed Building and is located to the north.

#### 4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

Consideration of planning application by Panel

- 4.1 The application was first reported to the Panel of 25<sup>th</sup> August 2005 and consideration was deferred to allow a Members site visit to take place.
- 4.2 This application was then reported to the Plans Panel of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2005. The Members site visit took place on the morning of the Panel. The application report carried a recommendation that planning permission be granted subject to a condition restricting hours of operation. Members resolved not to accept the recommendation to grant planning permission and requested that officers bring back a report setting out a suggested reason for refusal based on their concerns over noise levels at nearby properties.
- 4.2 The relevant Panel minute also noted:

"The Panel indicated that if the scheme were to be resubmitted in the future with noise attenuation provisions, that Members would be more inclined to grant permission."

4.3 This application was then reported to the Plans Panel 20<sup>th</sup> October 2005. The report set out a suggested reason. The reported noted that the applicant was prepared to install and carry out attenuation measures and "...Neighbourhoods and Housing enquiries have established that noise attenuation measures are achievable, however the actual details would need to be finalized. It is anticipated that a reduction in noise in the order of 5dB could be achieved. This would normally result in the noise from the reverse jet filters being inaudible from Croft House. These measures could be secured by condition."

## 4.4 The Panel resolved:

"To defer and delegate the matter to the Chief Planning and Development Services Officer for final approval, subject to:

- i) Restriction on hours of operation to 7:30 22:00;
- ii) Noise attenuation measures, details of which to be agreed, to be installed within three months."
- 4.5 At the same Panel a confidential report was also presented to Members. This report set out that the filters were installed in the summer of 2001 and consequently may be immune from planning control. This matter was subsequently referred to in the High Court judgement on the challenge to the permission.

# The Planning Permission

4.6 The planning permission was issued on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2005. Condition 2 of the permission stated:

"Within 2 months of this grant of planning permission details of measures to attenuate noise from the filters shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and such measures as shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority shall be installed within 3 months of approval and shall thereafter be retained."

# **High Court Challenge**

- 4.7 A legal challenge was then made against the grant of planning permission by a neighbouring land owner (Mr Snee). The decision was challenged on the grounds that:
  - 1. The officer concerned did not have lawful authority under the Council's scheme of delegation to grant the planning permission in question;
  - 2. The procedure followed by the City Council was unfair and/or improper;
  - 3. The decision was based on a material misdirection or factual error and/or was otherwise irrational.
- 4.8 The Deputy Judge in her written judgement, dated 7<sup>th</sup> March 2007, set out:
  - "...I think it was wholly perverse for the officers to tell the Members that noise levels could be reduced by 5dB when there was no evidence before them whatsoever as to how it could be achieved and by what level it would be reduced..." (Para. 22)

"So I grant relief to the claimant and quash the planning permission on the basis of irrationality and perversity of the Council's decision, based on a complete lack of evidence for the reasons they then reversed their decision." (Para. 33)

"I have to say that it might well be a Pyrrhic victory in this case because I am aware of the Environmental Health Officer's report, which of course put the Planning Officers in this case in a very difficult position. I am aware that they did not think there was a problem, and I am also aware that currently Mr Snee accepts that the noise attenuation measures are working. So it may well be that either nothing else is done, or a permission is granted subject to a similar condition, although one hopes they will make a condition that is clear and clearly enforceable, which provides some sort of details of what the amelioration measures to be continued are." (Para. 34)

"It was also raised, very much, as he admits, as a last minute thought by Mr Carter for the defendants, that this installation, having been put in 2001, may well now be immune from action under the four year rule. That may be the case, but it was not a matter that I am prepared now to consider as to whether or not it should mean that I should refuse the relief sought. All I can say is that I cannot predict what the Members' views towards a reconsideration of the application will be. It is not for me to attempt to determine the outcome of the Members' consideration. Suffice it to say that whilst I am doubtful that the claimant will get all that he is hoping to achieve, I cannot say that the outcome is so obviously going to be the same that I should with hold relief." (Para. 35)

"Accordingly, I quash the planning permission of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2005 and remit the matter back to the defendants" (Para. 36)

# 5.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS:

5.1 Since the High Court challenge discussions have been ongoing with the applicant as to the way forward. Early discussions centred on what measures could be

implemented to attenuate noise from the filters and how a planning condition could be worded. However, concerns about the effectiveness of such attenuation measures, including their longevity, and the ability to enforce the terms of the condition led to the consideration of an alternative approach. Ultimately it was considered that the key test was the noise level generated by the filters and whether this would cause harm to the amenities of those who work and live in the vicinity of the site. The applicant undertook a noise survey to provide a baseline of data against which the levels generated by the reverse jet filters could be judged. Accordingly an approach was agreed as to what would be an acceptable level of noise when measured at the boundary to the site and that noise emissions from the filters should not exceed this level. In the circumstances where the use of the filters exceeds that agreed noise level then their use shall stop. This approach is consistent with the guidance on the imposition of planning conditions set out in Circular 11/95, 'The use of conditions in planning permissions'.

## 6.0 PUBLIC/LOCAL RESPONSE:

Application as originally considered by Plans Panel in October 2005

- A site notice was posted on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2004 and the notification period expired on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2004.
- 6.2 Councillor Leadley and Councillor Grayshon both requested that the application be reported to Panel for determination. Councillor Leadley also requested that a Members site visit take place and this occurred on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2005.
- 6.3 Three letters of objection were received, one from Mr Snee (adjacent resident and landowner), one from Technoprint (adjacent company) and one from a visitor to Technoprint.
  - The silos are the tallest structure in the area and the new filters are unsightly.
  - The noise emitted from the equipment constitutes a statutory nuisance.
- A noise survey was carried out by Scott Wilson and a report was been submitted in support of Mr Snee's objection to the application. The submitted report concluded that:
  - An assessment in accordance with British Standard 4142 ('Rating industrial
    noise affecting mixed residential and industrial areas') has indicated that there is
    a likelihood of complaints (from Croft House) due to noise from the recently
    installed reverse jet filters. With the introduction of suitable acoustic attenuators
    to the reverse jet filters, it should be possible to mitigate the noise levels to within
    acceptable standards.

Revised application as reported to Panel in January 2011

- 6.5 The following publicity has been given in respect of the most recently submitted (by the applicant) noise survey:
  - Site notices were erected at 6 locations around the application site on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2010.
  - A copy of the submitted noise survey and a proposed draft of condition 2 was been sent to Mr Snee the neighbour most affected by the development. The letter was dated 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2010 and gave 21 days for comment.

- An email setting out the detail of the proposal, the background to the case and the proposed condition (2) was sent to the ward Members for Morley South (and copied to the Morley North Members) on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2010.
- 6.6 No further representations have been received from members of the public save for Mr Snee.
- 6.7 Mr Snee has commented as follows:

"...the work undertaken since 2007 to reduce noise from the Reverse Jet Filters has been very effective, for which we are grateful, and we have only had cause to make one complaint about noise from the RJFs in the last year or so, which I think was due to the sound insulation material becoming detached, and which was promptly dealt with. I should add that the relationship with PPG / Kalon is much improved and they have been considerate and helpful on the occasions when issues have been raised by us.

In respect of the proposed condition:

- i) The operating times are not opposed
- ii) I am not sure what measurement the 80db (fast) refers to. If this is 'Lmax' (i.e. slightly above the level recorded on page 6 of the NVM Report) then we are that's fine, but would ask that Lmax is specified in the condition rather than 'fast' so that there is clarity in the condition and also a reference point in the report to which any future measurements can be compared.

There are three points in the NVM report which I should like to comment on:

- i) The statement on page 2 that the 'single dwelling' within our site is 'unoccupied and has not been occupied for some years' is incorrect. I presume this refers to 'Croft House', which <u>is</u> occupied and has been for several years. The dilapidated building is the adjoining (smaller) 'Croft Cottage', which is currently unoccupied and has been repeatedly vandalised, unfortunately.
- ii) The BS 4142 Assessment on page 10 of the NVM report refers to a 'background noise level' of 55 dBA L90. I cannot find that figure in any other table in the report; the L90 figure shown on page 5 (Lowest Background Noise) is 46.9 which would produce a difference in the BS 4142 Assessment of +14 (61 47) and the L90 figure in the table on page 6 is 43.3 (BS 4142 Assessment difference of +17).
- iii) Measurements were only taken when one RJF was operating. It is not uncommon for more than one silo filter to be in use concurrently.

These points are relevant because if the limit in proposed condition 2 is considerably higher than the noise levels recorded by NVM in June 2009, then we would need to take advice on the likely effect, particularly since the impulsive nature and sound characteristic of the RJF emissions can be very intrusive and annoying. If however, the condition effectively recognises and limits the noise levels to what we have now, then there is not a problem as far as we are concerned."

- In light of these comments further advice was sought from colleagues in Neighbourhoods and Housing. As a consequence the wording of the condition has been amended to address the point raised by Mr Snee at the first point ii) of his email. Neighbourhoods and Housing further commented:
  - "...In answer to Mr Snee's question as to whether the level in the condition is significantly higher than the measured levels in the report, the answer is no as a

3dB increase in sound is generally the lowest level increase that the human ear can detect and provided the sound insulation measures applied to RJF are maintained, there should be no issue."

- 6.9 On 16<sup>th</sup> January Mr Snee made further representations and these led to officers requesting that consideration of the planning application be deferred at the Plans Panel of 20<sup>th</sup> January (see para. 1.1 above). A summary of Mr Snee's comments are set out below:
  - It was assumed that 80dB L<sub>Amax</sub> was only slightly higher than the sound level now emitted by the silo filters.
  - However having reviewed our (Mr Snee's) records and the consultants' reports from 2004 / 2005, it is clear that the L<sub>Amax</sub> sound level could not be anywhere near 80dB. Consequently, some of the previous representations made and quoted in the report to Plans Panel, are wrong.
  - 80dB is the 'first action value' under the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005, which means that noise at that level is potentially loud enough to cause long-term damage to hearing (if one is exposed to it for long enough).
  - Sound level measurements taken (by Mr Snee's consultants) in July and August 2004, show the noise from the RJFs to be only just over 70dB at their highest. These sound levels were recorded <u>before</u> any attenuation work was done to the silo filters and even at that level were the cause of much annoyance and complaint.
  - It is assumed it is not the Council's intention to give a permission which would allow the silo filters to emit sound levels higher than those experienced in 2005 when the Plans Panel made its first decision. It is presumed Members will not be happy to do a site visit and then find that the condition they are asked to approve bears no relation to what they may (or may not) have heard.
  - It was requested that consideration of the application be deferred to allow a
    council officer to record the L<sub>Amax</sub> noise that is actually emitted when one or
    more RJF's are operating and for the planning condition to be based on that
    evidence. It was requested that consideration of the planning application be
    deferred and then both PPG and ourselves (Mr Snee) to then have the
    opportunity to express our thoughts on what the figure in the condition ought
    to be.
- 6.10 Morley Town Council have commented in detail on the history of the proposal including the installation of the Reverse Jet Filters, the consideration of the planning application in 2005 and the High Court challenge. In addition the Town Council make the following comments:
  - Panel Members should visit the site again and witness the operation of the valves.
  - In 2006 Kalon did find a solution that was acceptable to Mr Snee in that the
    filters were packed with rock-wool. However, with the passage of time the
    rock-wool deteriorated in some way and became less effective. However, this
    method should have been described in drawings and conditioned and its
    effectiveness monitored. If the rock-wool deteriorated and the noise emission
    exceeded an agreed limit then the rock wool should have been required by
    planning condition.

Comments on revised wording to condition 2 as now presented to Panel

6.11 Mr Snee confirmed in an email dated 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2011 that he raises no objections to the terms of the condition setting the noise level at 56dB LAmax.

#### 7.0 CONSULTATIONS RESPONSES:

#### Non-statutory:

7.1 Noise and Environmental Protection – No objections subject to the imposition of condition 2. Noise readings were taken on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011 at the site and this showed that the regular pulse of the RJF's to range at 52-53dBL<sub>Amax</sub>. The noise monitoring exercise showed much lower levels of the silos operating that in the applicant's consultant's report in 2009 which showed levels of 73dBL<sub>Amax</sub>. When compared with background noise is considered that the noise from the RJF's is insignificant.

#### 8.0 PLANNING POLICIES:

- 8.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 Act provides that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan includes the Regional Spatial Strategy to 2026 (RSS) and the adopted Leeds Unitary Development Plan (Review 2006). The RSS was issued in May 2008 and includes a broad development strategy for the region, setting out regional priorities in terms of location and scale of development. In view of the relatively small scale of this proposal, it is not considered that there are any particular policies which are relevant to the assessment of this application.
- 8.2 Turning to the Unitary Development Plan (Review): the relevant policy is GP5 general planning considerations which provides that development proposals should resolve detailed planning considerations including problems of environmental intrusion and loss of amenity.
- 8.3 In terms of other material considerations, the main national policy guidance of relevance is Planning Policy Guidance 24 'Planning and Noise'. This sets out that noise can be a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. It progresses to state that local planning authorities must ensure that development does not cause an unacceptable degree of disturbance and they may wish to consider the use of appropriate conditions. Sudden impulses, irregular noise or noise which contains a distinguishable continuous tone will require special consideration.

# 9.0 MAIN ISSUES

- 9.1 The main issues are:
  - Visual impact
  - Noise and disturbance

#### 10.0 APPRAISAL

#### Visual Impact

10.1 The existing filters are just over 600mm taller then those which were replaced. Given that the filters are located on top of the existing silos the increase in height is noticeable, however it is not considered that they result in any significant impact on the visual amenity of the area.

#### Noise and disturbance

- 10.2 Central to the consideration of this application is the noise emitted by the RJF's that are fitted to the top of storage silos. The silo's and filters form part of the applicant's paint manufacturing plant and through their operation they emit a short hiss of air every 15 seconds or so as pressure is released from the valves to the silo's. The neighbouring land owner, Mr Snee, occupies a property (Rods Mill) that shares a boundary with the application site. This land incorporates a business and residential premises. At the time of the determination of the planning application in October 2005, Mr Snee, raised strong objections to the grant of planning permission. Eventually the Plans Panel resolved to grant planning permission subject to a condition that measure be put in place to reduce the noise emitted by the RJF's. This condition required details of a scheme to be submitted to the Council for approval that show how noise emissions were to be reduced. The grant of planning permission was subject to a legal challenge by Mr Snee and this was considered by the High Court. In guashing the decision the Deputy Judge set out her view that it was perverse for officers to tell the Members (of Plans Panel East) that noise from the filters could be reduced by 5dB when there was no evidence before them. The Deputy Judge was also critical of condition 2 attached to the planning permission of 31st October 2005 in that it lacked clarity, did not give certainty and consequently the enforcement of the condition was uncertain. At around the time of the consideration of the High Court case the applicant undertook some works to the filters to reduce noise emissions.
- 10.3 As a result of the more recent negotiations with the applicant the following information has been submitted:
  - Noise Survey Report dated 16<sup>th</sup> July 2009.
  - Letter from applicant dated 7<sup>th</sup> June 2010, and attachments, which sets out the noise reduction works that have been implemented at the four silos.
  - A further letter with attachments from the applicant, undated but date stamped received on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010, and this serves to clarify the extent of the works and the date by which were they carried out.
- The submitted noise survey report concludes that there appears to be little difference in noise emission levels between the four RJF's (in that each RJF emits a similar level and sort of noise). An assessment of the noise levels against British Standards shows that complaints are unlikely and that the RJF noise is insignificant compared with the normal and typical site operations noise (see comment at para. 10.10 of this report).
- 10.5 The applicant's letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> June 2010 sets out the measures that have been implemented to reduce noise from the RJF's. These reduce discharge noise and the pulse noise and the measures are shown on sketches and annotated photographs and include:

- The box that encases the working filters has been lined (at least in part) with sound deadening foam.
- Air outlet silencers have been fitted and these are lined with 40mm sound deadening foam.
- The air outlets exhausts have been modified to direct noise away from Mr Snee's property.
- Solenoid valve box covers have been fitted and these are lined with sound deadening foam.
- The applicant has confirmed that these works were completed by August 2009. Although it is noted that at the time of the High Court Hearing in March 2007 Her Honour Judge Hamilton stated that "...I am also aware that currently Mr Snee accepts that the noise attenuation measures are working" (para. 34).
- 10.7 It is understood that at sometime the applicant attempted to reduce noise from the RJF's by lining them with rock wool. However, it is understood that after a period of time the rock-wool failed.
- 10.8 In her judgment Judge Hamilton commented that ultimately it may be that "...a permission is granted subject to a similar condition, although one hopes they will make a condition that is clear and clearly enforceable, which provides some sort of details of what the amelioration measures to be continued are" (para.34).
- 10.9 Condition 2 that is before Members for consideration does not specify that the measures shown on the submitted sketches and photographs shall constitute a scheme of sound amelioration measures that shall be continued. Instead the condition is worded so that it sets out acceptable noise parameters in which the silos and the RJF's should operate. Whilst this does not describe the amelioration measures in line with the observation made by the High Court judge in paragraph 34 of her judgment, the proposed condition has been drafted along the lines of a model condition set out in out in central government advice (Circular 11/95) on such matters (condition 8 Appendix A). Having taken legal advice it is considered that this condition fulfils the policy tests in Circular 11/95 in that it is necessary; relevant to planning; relevant to the development to be permitted; enforceable; precise; and reasonable in all other respects. The condition sets out acceptable noise parameters in which the silo's should operate and its terms also mean that any potential breach can be easily identified by taking noise measurements at the appropriate position set out in the condition. If there is a breach of the condition then the Council can, via enforcement action, require the cessation of the use of the filters.
- 10.10 The noise level set out in the condition reflects the Council's noise readings undertaken on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011 and not those set out in the applicant's noise survey of July 2009. It is noted that the applicant has confirmed that the noise attenuation works were completed (August 2009) after their noise survey was undertaken. The Council's noise readings were taken at a time when the sound attenuation measures were in place and achieve a level that does not cause harm to the amenities of the occupiers of nearby properties.

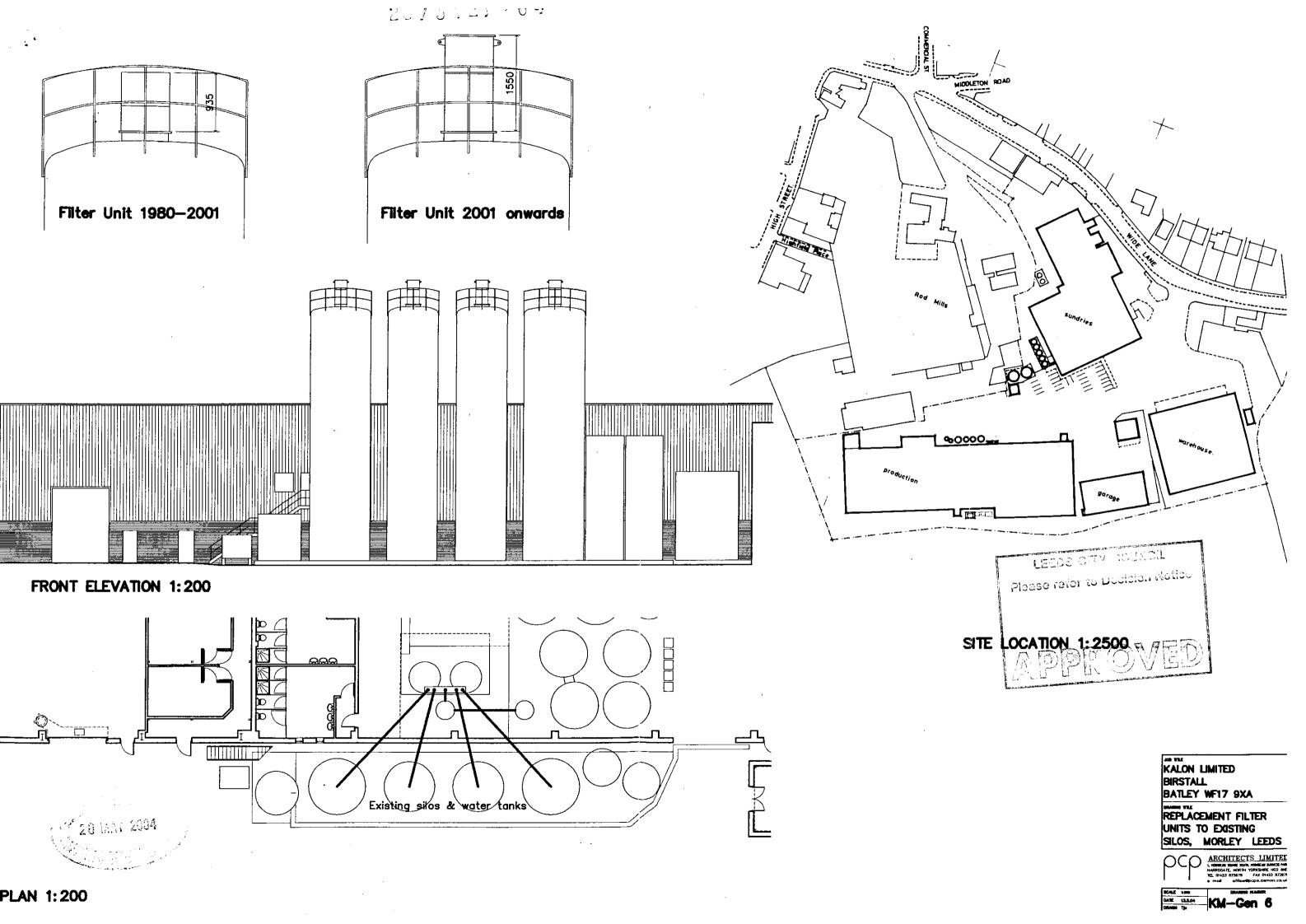
#### 11.0 CONCLUSION

11.1 In conclusion it is not considered that the proposals result in harm to the character or visual amenities of the area. The amenities of those who live or work adjacent to the site can be protected by a condition that restricts noise levels at the boundary to the site. If the terms of the condition are found to be breached then it will be open for the

City Council to take enforcement action to seek the cessation of the use of the filters. It is considered that this approach allows a business to continue whilst protecting the character and amenities of the area.

# **Background Papers:**

Application and history files.
Certificate of Ownership signed by applicant.



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Figure 1 Photograph in yard

# Notes to the figure above:

Four silos are shown and the reverse jet filter (RJF) machinery shown marked 'A'.

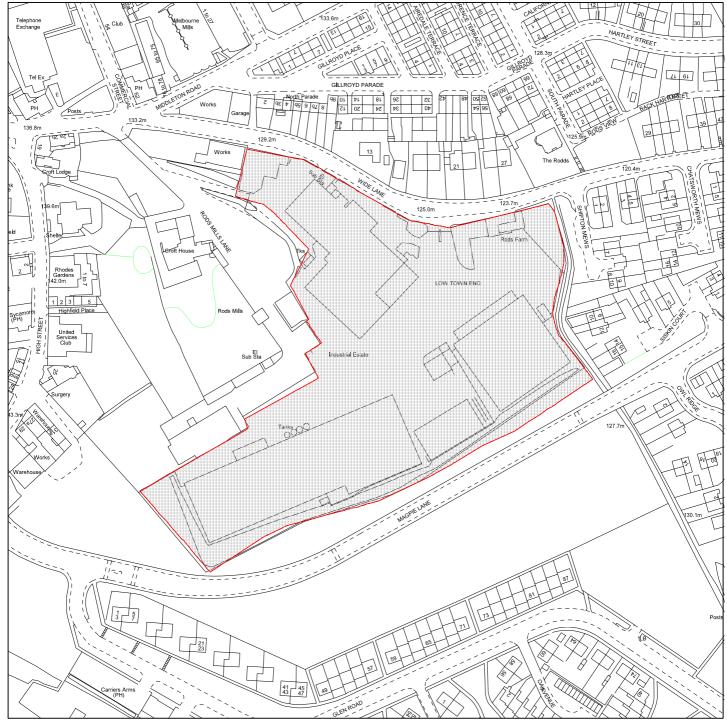
'B' denotes the neighbour property.

'C' marks the noise measurement location (behind the blue pallet stack).

# Kalon Ltd., Wide Lane, Morley, LS27

# 23/312/04/FU





**Scale:** 1:2158

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Organisation	Not Set
Department	Not Set
Comments	East Panel, 20th January 2011
Date	29 December 2010
SLA Number	Not Set

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