

Stoneyburn yard plan will save business thousands in vehicle miles

A landscaping and horticulture company aiming to build a net zero business in the countryside has been granted planning permission to develop a yard in West Lothian.

GMCb believes that moving to a single site in Stoneyburn, in sight of the Five Sisters, will allow the firm to become self-sufficient and cut thousands of miles per year in vehicle journeys.

Colin Hardie, an agent for the business, said the site would allow the firm to compost its own green waste as well as rear trees and shrubs for planting on its client project sites.

A decision had been delayed from an earlier hearing to allow environmental reports to be filed. The firm had also been asked for slight modifications to their plans and to work with the council on development details.

This month's meeting of the council's Development Management Committee backed plans for the business to develop a green waste composting area, additional horticulture production areas, and office and vehicle equipment storage buildings, on land to the north-west of Auchenhard Farm in Stoneyburn.

Mr Hardie told the committee when the application was first tabled that the firm currently has to use an additional site

near Edinburgh to compost green waste.

He told councillors in June: "This next step allows them to be self-sufficient. It allows them to recycle all their own green waste, to turn it into compost. Currently they use a facility on the far side of Edinburgh because of limited facilities in West Lothian. They will rear their own trees and shrubs on this site."

"Between these two measures alone the company will save over 30,000 commercial vehicle miles a year."

Planners stressed at the initial hearing that they had no issues with the proposals for planting and composting but did not agree with plans for two large sheds which would be used to store equipment and fertilisers.

GMCb is a local family business set up in 2004. It currently employs 30 people, with plans to expand including using the single facility in Stoneyburn.

Mr Hardie added that the planned sheds on the site were specifically to house large trailers. Company vehicles are usually taken home by employees. The trailers are currently stored at an industrial facility nearby. Ridgelines for the buildings will now be lowered.

Planners said in a report to this month's committee: "The applicant has now submitted an acceptable justification for the development and has reduced the height and, therefore, the visual impact of the buildings. These details are acceptable."

Mr Hardie said: "This project takes major steps towards the company being net zero. They work throughout central Scotland with many blue-chip clients including Historic Scotland."

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter