SUPPORTING STATEMENT

IN RESPECT OF AN APPLICATION FOR AN OPERATIONAL CHANGE OF USE AT

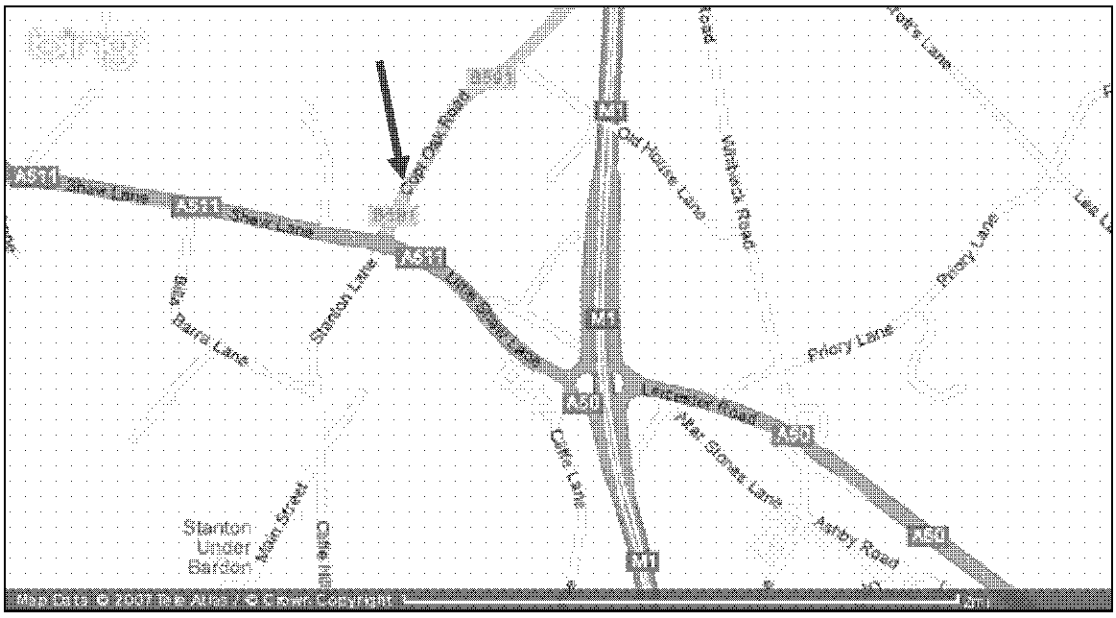
MARKFIELD HIGHWAYS DEPOT,
COPT OAK ROAD,
MARKFIELD,
LEICESTER,
LE67 9PJ

PREPARED BY REBECCA WOOLLEY

DATED 3RD AUGUST 2009

DESCRIPTION & LOCATION

The Markfield Highways Depot is located on Copt Oak Road, Markfield as shown on the plan below.



The depot is located 2 miles from the centre of the village of Markfield, half a mile from Junction 20 of the M1 and 11 miles from Leicester. The market town of Coalville is only 4 miles from the site.

The site extends to 819.50m^2 (8,821ft^2) or thereabouts and comprises of a hardcore and concrete base which is predominantly level although the land gradually falls away to the south.

The land has a conifer hedge boundary to the north. There are fences to the remaining boundaries although these are currently in a dilapidated condition.

A double metal gate provides vehicular access to and from the depot. This gate is kept locked due to the value of the equipment and materials kept on site.

There are currently two buildings on site. These comprise of two concrete sectional garages both with profile sheet roofs (possibly asbestos) and both with timber doors. The buildings have concrete bases. The buildings are used for the storage of vehicles and equipment associated with the day to day management of the highways in the District.

A number of buildings on the site have been demolished over the years. However the photographs included within this application show the former buildings on site.

USE

The depot was acquired by Leicestershire County Council in 1938 and has been used a Highways Depot since 1966. The site has been used for the storage and distribution of various vehicles connected with highways maintenance, including lorries, trailers, tractors and road sweepers. A diesel tank, formally located on the site was used for fuelling the vehicles.

Materials stored on site, also for highway maintenance purposes, include sand, kerb stones, pipe work and drainage equipment, signage and fencing and road surface dressings. Two garages are also used for the storage of road signs which are in constant demand. In addition a skip is frequently situated on site in order to allow for the secure disposal of waste materials.

The depot has also been used as a base for Leicestershire County Council Highway staff to collect and deposit equipment and materials. An emergency team has 24 hour access to the site. Two members of staff operate from the site and collect their vehicles and equipment from the site on a daily basis.

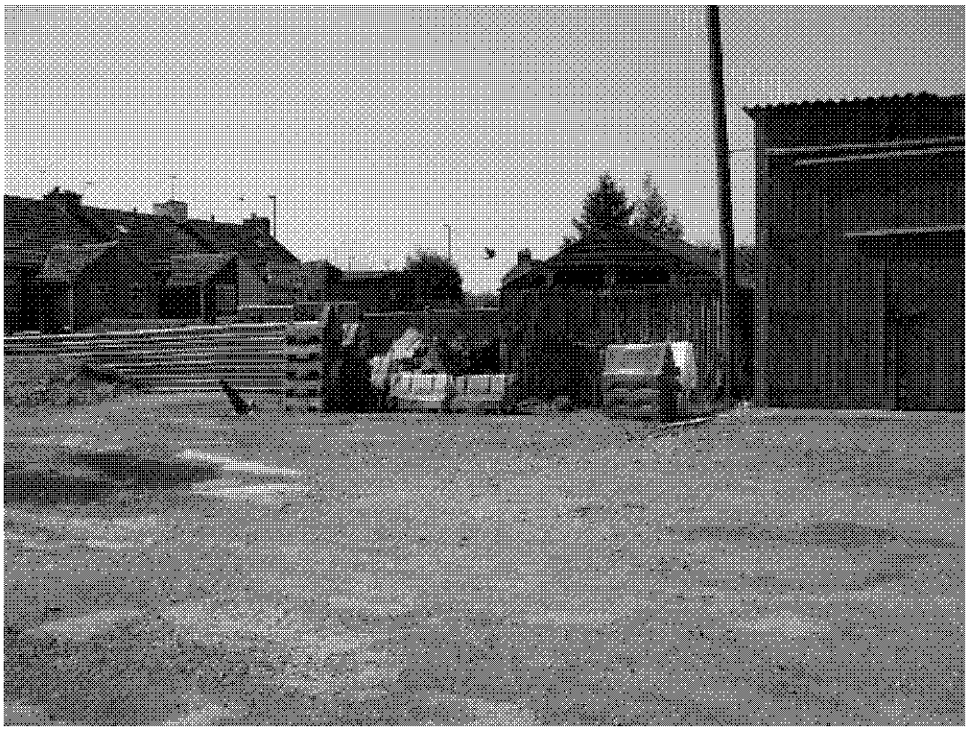
More recently the site has become a storage facility for the Forestry Division of the County Council who use the site for the storage of forestry machinery and equipment together with wood chippings before these are collected for recycling purposes.

The photographs below, which were taken on the 20th April 2009 illustrate the current use of the Depot.

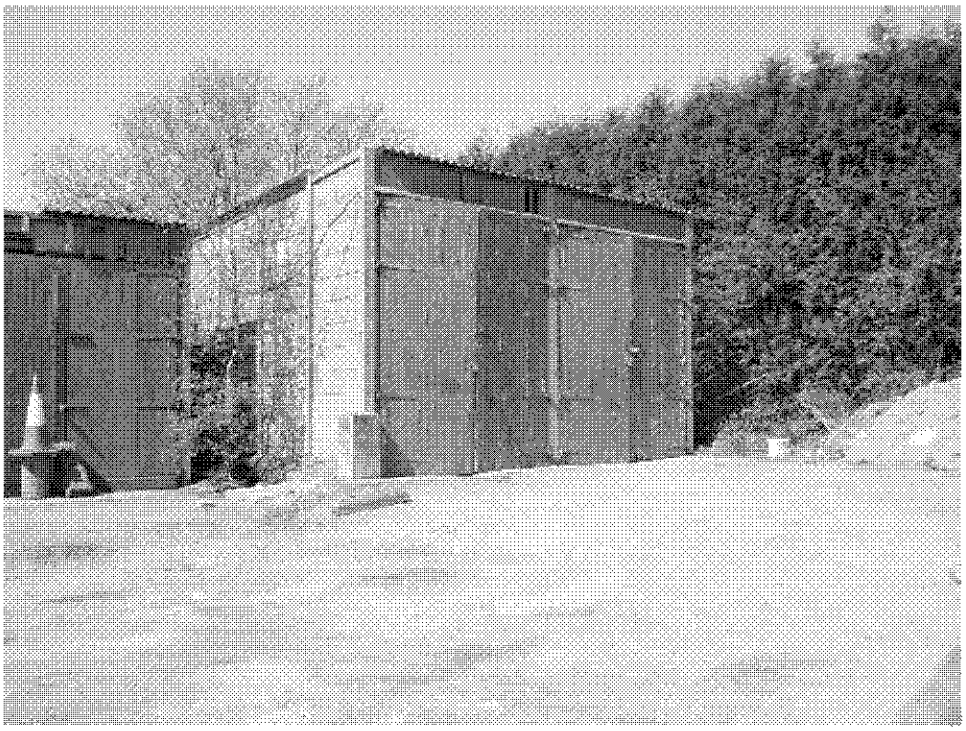


Photograph One – Photograph one shows the area of the depot used for wood chippings. Hardcore and spoil from road workings are also stored on

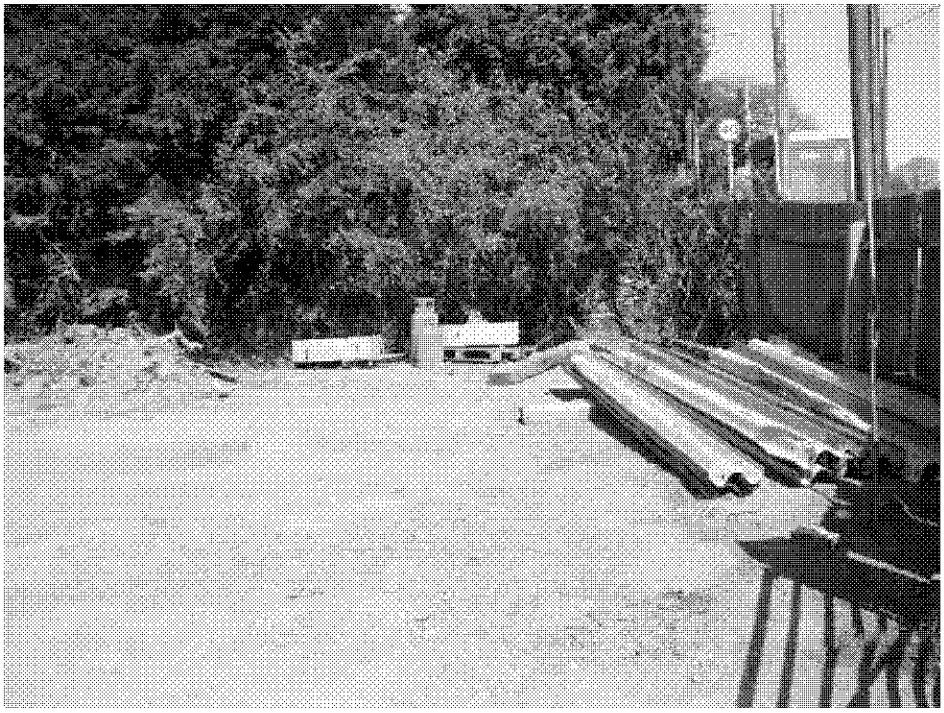
site together with equipment used in association with road works.



Photograph Two – Showing equipment used in association with road works.



Photograph Three – The existing buildings on site. The buildings are used for the storage of staff vehicles and highway maintenance vehicles and machinery and equipment.



Photograph Four – Central reservation crash barriers and other highway equipment is frequently stored on site until it is required.

LAYOUT, APPEARANCE AND LANDSCAPING

Leicestershire County Council does not intend to make any changes to the current use of the site and will continue to operate a highways depot from the site for the foreseeable future.

Over the period of the County Councils ownership of the depot a number of the buildings have been removed and the photographs included within this application illustrate the changes on the site over time.

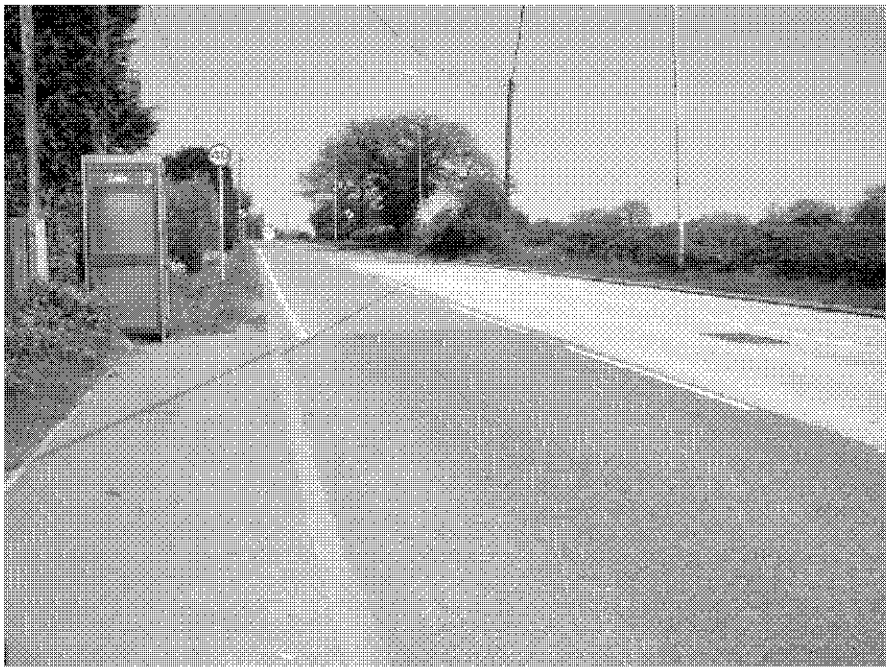
The diesel tank originally located on site has been removed together with the former toilet facilities although the depot still benefits from a mains water connection.

ACCESS

The Highways Depot is located close to the Flying Horse Roundabout in Markfield. The site lies to the north of the roundabout and is accessed directly from Copt Oak Road via a pair of recessed double gates.

The access has remained unchanged and we do not consider that it represents a highways risk. Vehicles are able to pull off the main highway to open the gates to obtain access to the site.

The photographs below show how access is taken from the site from Copt Oak Road.



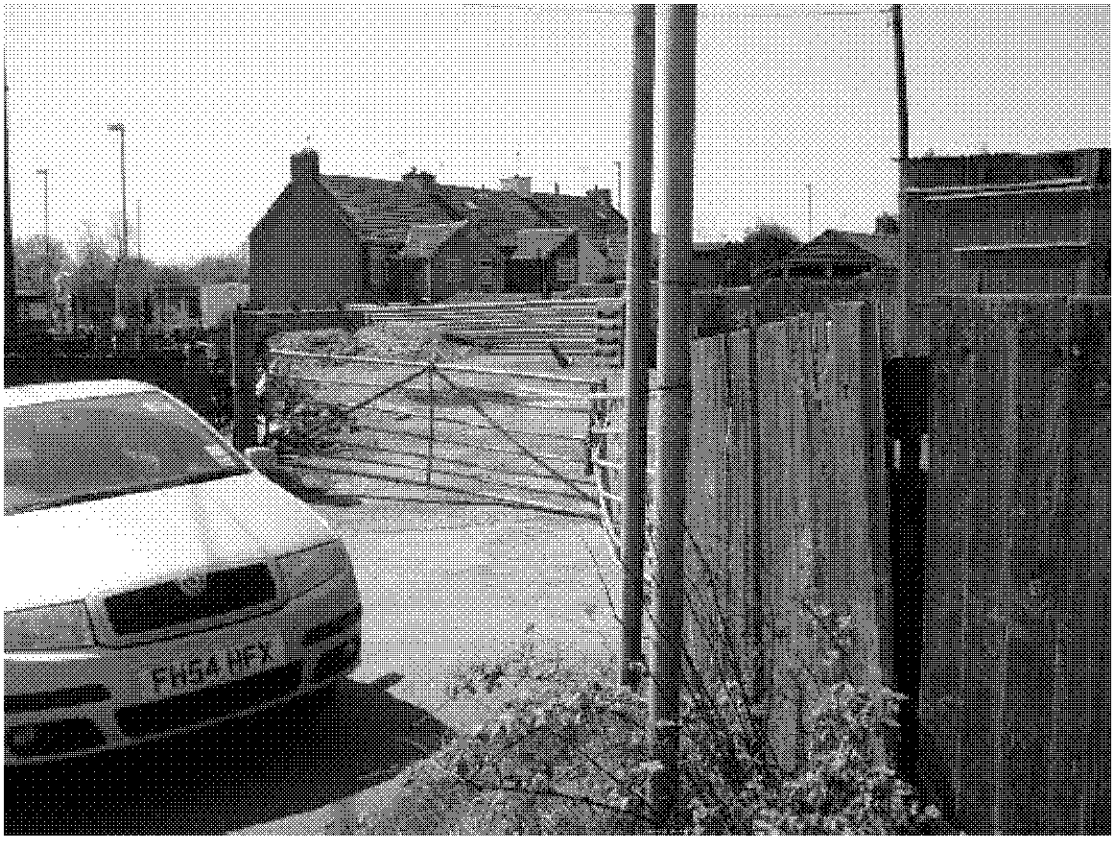
Photograph One – Looking north from the entrance gateway towards Copt Oak.



Photograph Two – Looking south towards the Flying Horse Roundabout.



Photograph Three – Looking south towards the Flying Horse Roundabout. The entrance gates into the site are recessed allowing vehicles to pull of the main carriage way to open or close the gates to the site.



Photograph Four – Entrance gates into the site.

HISTORIC USE OF THE DEPOT

The depot has been owned by Leicestershire County Council since 1938 and the site has been operated as a highways depot since the mid 1960's.

Attached to this planning application are two Statutory Declarations from former members of Staff who have worked at the site during the course of their employment with the County Council.

Together with the statutory declarations we are in also in possession of a quantity of historic photographs which demonstrate that the site has indeed been used and operated as a highways depot for a significant period of time.

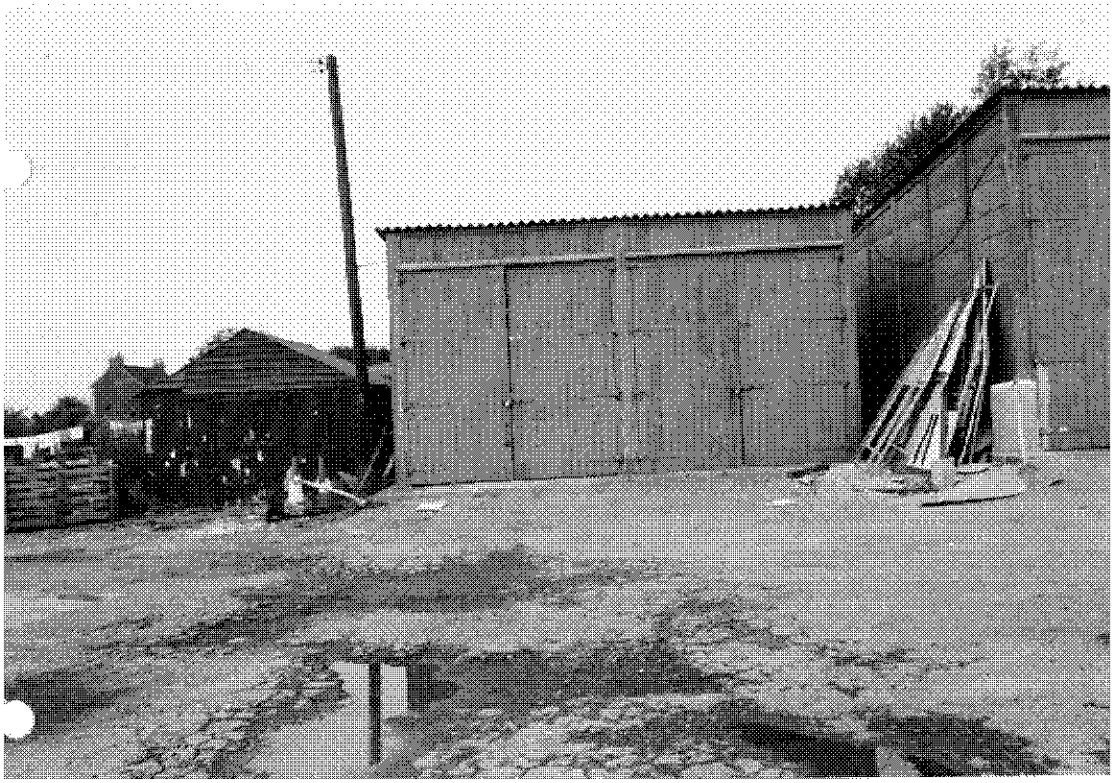
The black and white photographs included within this Supporting Statement date from July 1984.



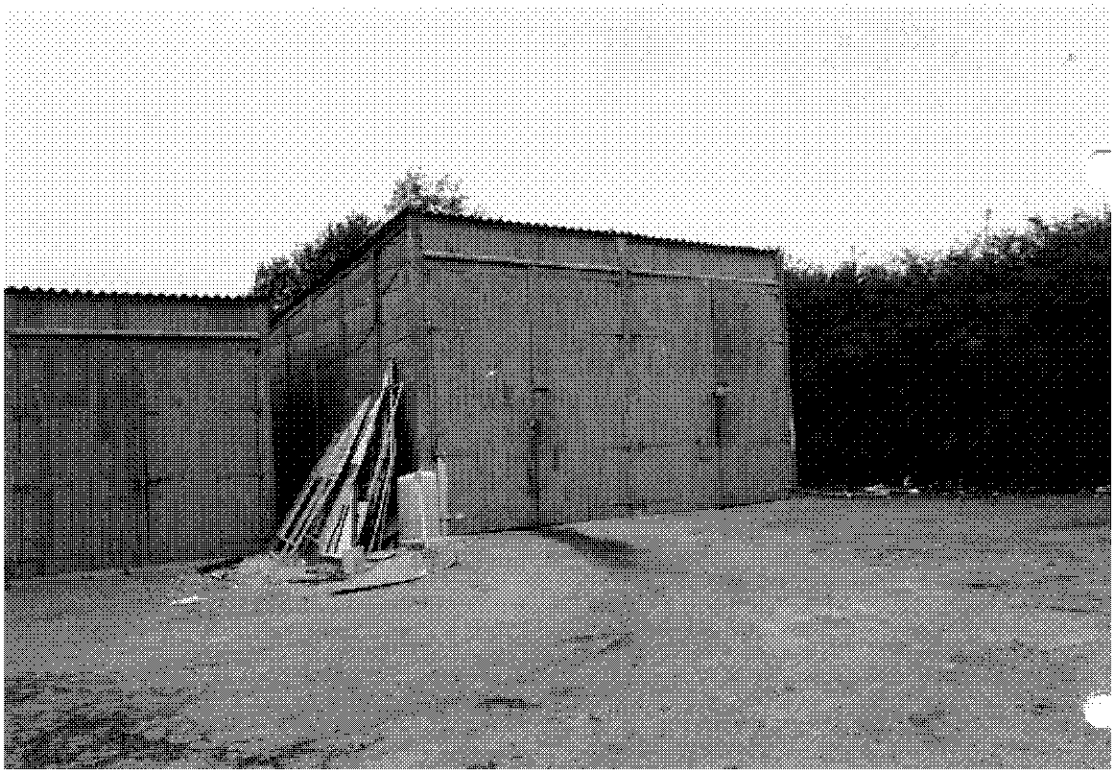
Photograph One – Diesel tank and brick built WC building which has now been demolished. The diesel tank was removed from site in 1995.



Photograph Two – The access drive has changed little over the years however significant improvements have been made to the Flying Horse Roundabout.



Photograph Three - Workshop building which is still located on site. Road signage is shown stored on site.



Photograph Four - The largest of the workshop buildings. This building is still in situ and is a used on a daily basis as a vehicle store.

RATINGS ASSESSMENT

The depot has historically been subject to Rates Payments and we have records of Ratings Assessments dating back to 1995.

The building is described by the Valuation Agency as a Storage Depot and Premises. Information relating to the Ratings Assessment can be found at www.voa.gov.uk.

The VOA clearly acknowledged that the site was being fully utilised as an operational highways depot for storage and distribution purposes as no discounts were applied to the facility.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION REQUIRED BY HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Following a meeting with Sarah Humphries of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council in December 2008 we have been provided with feedback in respect of the Council's previous applications for a Certificate of Lawful Use for the site. Two former applications (Application Refs: 06/00006/CLU and 08/00739/CLU) in respect of obtaining a Certificate of Lawful Use have been rejected due to the applicant submitting insufficient evidence to support the application. As such the Borough Council have asked us to provide the following information in respect of the site.

1. ***Is the depot currently being utilised and if so for what purposes and how frequently?***

The depot is used on a daily basis. Leicestershire County Council vehicles are stored on site over night. Two members of staff operate from the depot on a permanent basis and collect their vehicles from the depot in the morning leaving their own cars on site during the day.

The depot is used for the storage and distribution of materials and equipment required by staff members in order to allow them to carry out their designated duties. These materials can range from road dressings, kerb stones, tarmac and sand to signage, bollards and central reservation barriers.

The depot is also used as a storage base for Leicestershire County Council's Forestry Department who use the site for the storage of wood chippings and the storage of their own machinery and equipment.

2. ***We have attached to this Application two statutory declarations from members of staff who have, over the course of their employment, been responsible for the day to day operational running of the site.***

Please refer to the supporting documentation attached to this application.

3. ***Do Leicestershire County Council hold any records relating to the age of the buildings erected on site?***

The two existing buildings located on site; two concrete sectional buildings with timber doors, were erected in 1976.

Historically other buildings, including a small toilet block and a diesel tank, were situated on site. However the last of these buildings was demolished in 1995.

4. ***The Statutory Declarations from Neil Wood and Frank Bedford indicated that the site was used as a "Central Base" and "Emergency Team Base". The planners have asked for clarification on these definitions.***

Central Base – The Markfield base is centrally located within the North West Leicestershire District and provides quick and easy access to a range of major arterial roads in the area. Historically the County Council had the responsibility for maintaining the motorways within its region. As such Markfield Highways Depot was considered a suitable site as it provides quick and easy access to the A50, A46, M1 and A42.

Emergency Team Base – There are significant quantities of emergency signage stored at the Markfield Highways Depot hence the reference to the site as an Emergency Team Base.

5. ***How long has the Markfield Depot been in situ and what employment levels have been maintained during this period?***

The County Council acquired the land in September 1938 for the purposes of a depot site and the depot has been used for the storage of machinery, equipment and vehicles since 1966.

Although the Highways and Maintenance vehicles are collected daily, usually by two staff members the site is frequently visited by other Leicestershire County Council Highways employees in accordance with their daily duties. This may include the collection or dropping off of materials, the collection of signage or the collection of machinery or equipment.

The majority of Leicestershire County Council staff who operate from the depot are not based at Markfield Depot but at larger more secure depots such as Croft Highways Depot and Mountsorrel Highways Depot.

6. ***What exactly was stored at the site during the working lifetime of the site and in what sorts of quantities?***

Throughout the lifetime of the site items such as hardcore, sand, kerb stones, central reservation crash barriers, road dressings, signs and equipment

associated with road works and machinery and equipment associated with the operational day to day maintenance of the highways have been stored on site.

It would be impossible to quantify the levels of stock that has been stored on site during its lifetime.

7. ***How many trips in and out of the site by employees and by delivery vehicles, are made on a daily basis both currently and historically?***

Due to the very varied nature of the materials and equipment based on the site it would be impossible to quantify staff movements and deliveries to the depot over the lifetime of the site; however as stated previously two staff members do operate from the site on a daily basis.

8. ***What are the hours of operation on site and have these been relatively consistent during the lifetime of the site?***

The depot is in operation between 7.30am and 6.30pm Monday to Friday. 24 hour access is required to the site in the event of an out of hours delivery or an emergency and therefore the site may be operational over weekends. This pattern has remained consistent throughout the lifetime of the site.

9. ***How many and what type of vehicles are stored on site?***

One Leicestershire County Council highways flat bed lorry is currently stored on site together with a second vehicle although the nature of the second vehicle can vary between a second lorry or a smaller van type vehicle.

10. ***What is the capacity of the diesel tank and how long has a tank of this capacity been stored on site?***

The diesel tank was removed in 1995. The black and white photographs showing the diesel tank are historic.