

## **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 22 May 2024 at 6.00 pm in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford TF3 4JG**

**Present:** Councillors S J Reynolds (Chair), G Luter (Vice-Chair), S Bentley, N A Dugmore, T L B Janke, G L Offland, P J Scott and A S Jhawar (as substitute for J Jones)

**In Attendance:** A Gittins (Area Team Planning Manager - West), M Rowley (Principal Engineer), S Hardwick (Lead Lawyer: Litigation & Regulatory) and J Clarke (Senior Democracy Officer (Democracy))

**Apologies:** Councillors G H Cook and J Jones

#### **PC58      Declarations of Interest**

Cllr G Offland declared that in relation to planning application TWC/2022/0547 that her father and uncle had previously worked for Breedon Aggregates but were no longer employed there.

#### **PC59      Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 24 April 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

#### **PC60      Deferred/Withdrawn Applications**

None.

#### **PC61      Site Visits**

None.

#### **PC62      Planning Applications for Determination**

Members had received a schedule of planning applications to be determined by the Committee and fully considered each.

#### **PC63      TWC/2022/0547 - Leaton Quarry, Leaton, Telford, Shropshire TF6 5HB**

This was an application for a northern extension for the winning and working of minerals including the deepening of the existing quarry and retention of the existing associated operations incorporating: construction of screen mounds; formation of water settlement lagoons and; provision of public footpaths, with final restoration to a water body, agriculture, creation of biodiverse habitats and community open space at Leaton Quarry, Leaton, Telford, Shropshire,

TF6 5HB. The scheme would necessitate permissions under separate legislation for the stopping up of part of Leaton Lane and the diversion of existing and provision of new public footpaths.

The scheme comprised a Schedule 1 Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Development and this application had been referred to Planning Committee at the request of the previous Ward Member Cllr Jacqui Seymour.

A site visit had taken place on the afternoon prior to the meeting.

Councillor G Thomas, Ward Councillor, stated that the application had previously been called to committee by the former Ward Member, J Seymour, who, although did want the quarry to be extended due to its importance, there needed to be a balance. He raised concerns on behalf of local residents regarding previous levels and controls, highways, increased tonnage, with widening of Burcot Lane, dust and blasting and the mitigation measures.

Ms M Cotton, Applicant, spoke in favour the application which was a consolidation of the existing operations together with the northern extension of the current site providing nationally important mineral deposits with minimal impact on local residents and surrounding areas. The scheme provided control of hydrology, archaeology, ecology, blasting noise and dust and recent monitoring had confirmed that this was below the limits set out in the current planning permission. It sought to continue the employment of almost 100 staff as well as landscape contractors, construction industry and local suppliers. Operational movements would not be increased. There was a biodiversity net gain from the restoration scheme such as habitat creation and some public access to footpaths and bridleways and an area specifically restored for local residents to be used for picnics and events which would overlook the lake.

The Planning Consultant addressed members that Leaton Quarry was located to the north of the A5 and 3km east of Wellington. The application sought permission for a northerly extension with formation of a landscaped screen mound. The proposals would yield 21 million tonnes of new reserves comprising 13.5Mt in the proposed extension and 7.8Mt from the proposed deepening of the existing quarry. The proposals would require the stopping up of Leaton Lane. A public right of way would need to be diverted around the eastern edge of the extended workings and other rights of way would be created around the quarry site. The surface water settlement ponds would be re-located and the workings would be deepened. Restoration would be undertaken in the form of a lake with surrounding fields and woodland with a shallow habitat area being created in the south-east corner. The application was supported by an Environmental Statement containing reports in accordance with the Council's pre-application advice.

The NPPF recognised that minerals were a finite resource and great weight was given to the benefits of mineral extraction, particularly in relation to the economy. Policy ER6 set out the general requirements for working developments including the need to protect the environment and local

amenities and the extent to which the criteria for mineral working were met and ensured that there would be no adverse impacts after mitigation.

Wrockwardine Parish Council raised concerns that the proposals would adversely affect Wrockwardine and its surroundings and the effect on the Conservation Area and St Peter's Church. Further concerns were raised regarding blasting, air quality, ecology and highways, including the closure of Leaton Lane. Public representations had been received including 74 objections, 6 in support and 2 advocating the need for improved footpath provision. There were no outstanding objections from technical consultees, although some had recommended detailed planning conditions in the event permission was granted.

The NPPF required that mineral planning authorities should make appropriate provision for future aggregate demand by defining land-banks of permitted reserves. The Shropshire Telford & Wrekin sub-region has reserves of crushed rock which were significantly above the required land-bank. Only a limited number of quarries in the UK were capable of supplying HSAs and this made Leaton Quarry important both regionally and nationally.

The applicant had demonstrated that if the extension was not entered into at this stage the mineral it contains could be sterilised and this represented an exceptional circumstance under Policy ER3. In the absence of objections from technical consultees it was considered that the criteria for mineral working set out in Policy ER6 was met. Additionally, the proposals would continue to support the direct employment of around 100 personnel and a diverse range of skill sets.

The Heritage Statement had been updated and the Council considered that there would be less than substantial harm to the setting of Wrockwardine Conservation Area and the listed building at Leaton Grange and this needed to be balanced against the public benefits of the proposals, including the local economy and employment.

In terms of ecology, the application had been submitted before the formal requirement for biodiversity net gain came into effect, but the proposals would deliver 17.8% biodiversity net gain, which weighed in favour of the proposals. The applicant had agreed a condition delivering an equivalent net gain in linear hedgerow habitats as part of the progressive restoration proposals.

The landscape and visual impact appraisal found that overall landscape effects were well contained by woodland and hedgerow vegetation but there would be a significant localised change at Tiddicross House to the north of the proposed extension. The Parish Council has expressed concern regarding the visual effect of the proposed landscape screen mound but this would be blended in sympathetically into the surrounding landform.

In relation to the stopping up of Leaton Lane, this was a separate legal process and was not a pre-requisite for determination of the current application and the stopping up would not result in a severe impact after

mitigation in the way meant by the NPPF. A public right of way was proposed to the immediate north of the extension area, together with new footpath links around the quarry.

Noise, dust and blasting reports concluded that the quarry could continue to operate acceptably in relation to amenity issues and existing mitigation measures and conditions would continue to apply.

In conclusion it was considered that the application has justified the need to enter into the Northern Extension at this stage in order to prevent sterilisation of a premium mineral and the proposals would not give rise to any unacceptable adverse impacts after mitigation and as such, the proposals were considered to be sustainable and in accordance with the development plan overall.

The Highways Officer addressed Members and explained that Leaton Lane would be stopped up and the mineral excavated. This would result in Leaton Lane no longer being a through route. There would be a turning head at the Leaton termination in order that refuse lorries could service the properties, turn and come back out. Bollards or restrictive measures would be put in place to prevent access to Leaton Lane on the Wrockwardine end. Where access was required to the agricultural fields, this section of the road would be downgraded to footway/cycleway/bridleway and a key would be required to access via the bollards to prevent fly tipping and this was considered a betterment. Vehicles coming from the Wrockwardine direction, would have to change and re-direct to the Tiddicross or Allscott direction via Davids Bank.

In relation to Burcot Lane, there would be formalisation of existing passing places that had been formed by verge erosion and some would have surface dressing such as tarmac or stone. The work undertaken would be minimal but effective for local residents who were affected by the stopping up order in order to prevent the lane becoming a rat run.

The B5061 would be surfaced in full by the applicant from the site access up to the north of junction 7 of the M54 in order that it continued to be fit for purpose in the coming years.

In relation to the Holyhead Road junction and junction 7 of the M54, the Council had been collecting money from nearby schemes such as Haygate Fields, the quarry site and others. The funds had been building and they were currently looking at feasibility studies and options. Through this application it was considered that the focus on improving the condition of the B road was more relevant.

During the debate, some Members asked if there was an alternative proposal to the stopping up order and if traffic calming would be more appropriate on Burcot Lane. It was also asked if traffic on Burcot Lane would be increased. In relation to concerns on noise, dust and blasting, how often did this take place and when did it happen. Other Members asked if there was a single point of discharge for drainage and would it cope with the increased activity

and what were the hours of operation. Concerns were raised in relation to crushing through the night, the effects on the local heritage, the funding for the highway and its condition and noise impact on residents. It was also asked if a group could be set up with local residents for regular meetings to discuss issues and if there would be an increase in the amount of stone blasted. Members raised further concerns regarding increased traffic in and out of the Quarry and the frequency of lorries on Haygate Road and Holyhead Road at speed and late at night.

The Highways Officer confirmed that if the stopping up order was not processed by the Department of Transport the order would be quashed and the extension would not take place. In relation to Burcot Lane, this was self-enforcing due to forward visibility and traffic calming would not be effective. There would be an increase on traffic movements in Wrockwardine, but this was not the Quarry's responsibility and the increase of traffic would be very small. In relation to the highway and resurfacing of B5061, it was not something that needed doing straight away and as the consent had some time to run it was expected this could fall within a delivery window of 5 years. The work would be of high quality material which would last between 30-40 years, the life of the Quarry.

The Planning Consultant responded that blasting normally took place once a week with the blast being a single moment in time. There was a 15 minute warning and then an all clear sign after completion, so a blast event would be 30 minutes. Blast vibration was felt through the ground, although it could go into the air. The vibrations were monitored from 3 different locations and they had received confirmation that they were well within the consent limits and below nationally recognised limits. Blast events took a matter of seconds and had minimal effect. The site had a discharge consent from the Environment Agency and details were set out in the hydrological reports. A large soakaway and natural drainage were at the base of the Quarry void but these requirements were adequately sized and in accordance with specifications. Extraction of stone was Monday to Friday 6am to 6pm and 6am to 1pm on Saturdays. Coating was 5am to 11pm Monday to Friday and 5am to 5pm on Saturdays. Dispatch was 5am to midnight Monday to Friday and 5am to 5pm on Saturdays. There was no crushing past 6pm. Extraction processing was up to 6pm on weekdays and 1pm on Saturdays. There had been some special dispensations during covid in relation to dispatch of asphalt after 11pm however this had no impact on local residents and no complaints were ever received or raised at the Liaison Group and there was a robust schedule of conditions which were reviewed regularly. The local community liaison group met every 6 with months which included 6 local residents, but this could be increased. A dust mitigation plan was in place and there were proactive procedures that would anticipate this. In relation to noise, there was a well-constructed acoustic wall adjacent to the school and a lot of attention had been given to this. There was no anticipated increase in the amount of stone that could be won on the site and no reason to suspect the frequency of blasting would increase. It may be initially that some smaller blasts were undertaken but once the area was established normal blasting would apply. The level of traffic should be well within the normal operations. Some

flexibility was required for intermittent times when there were higher demands but this did not imply a continuous increase of output rates. As vehicles have entitlement to use public highways, it could not prevent the quarry from using the public highway. Officers could discuss what could be done in relation to notification campaigns on residential routes.

On being put to the vote it was, by a majority:

**RESOLVED – that:**

- a) delegated authority be granted to the Development Management Service Delivery Manager to grant full planning permission (with the authority to finalise any matters including conditions, the terms of any subsequent legal agreement, or any later variations**
  
- b) the conditions (with authority to finalise conditions and reasons for approval to be delegated to Development Management Service Delivery Manager) as set out in the report.**

The meeting ended at 7.03 pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** Wednesday 24 July 2024