

STRATEGIC AND TECHNICAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2026

Present: Cllrs Duncan Sowry-House (Chair), Richard Crabb, Scott Florek, Craig Monks, Pete Roper, David Taylor and David Tooke

Apologies: Cllrs Belinda Bawden, Matt Bell, Toni Coombs, Spencer Flower and Belinda Ridout

Cabinet Leads in attendance: Cllr Shane Bartlett

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Tony Cosgrove (Lead Project Officer (Minerals & Waste), Philip Crowther (Legal Business Partner - Regulatory), Felicity Hart (Minerals and Waste Planning Manager), John Miles (Democratic Services Officer), Megan Rochester (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer) and Cass Worman (Planning Officer)

43. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 24th March were confirmed and signed.

44. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

45. Registration for public speaking and statements

Representations by the public to the Committee on individual planning applications are detailed below. There were no questions, petitions or deputations received on other items on this occasion.

46. P/FUL/2022/01447 - Off Grange Hill, Steeple, Wareham, Dorset

The Case Officer presented the application with the aid of plans and aerial photographs, outlining the site, proposal and relevant policies. Members were advised that the application sought retrospective permission for continued ball clay extraction, an extension to extract ball clay and sand, and a comprehensive restoration and aftercare scheme secured over 30 years through a Section 106 agreement.

It was noted that the previous permission had lapsed in September 2024. The proposal would maintain extraction levels of 40,000 tonnes of ball clay per annum and introduce up to 60,000 tonnes of sand, with agreed HGV routes and

restrictions. Significant weight was given to the national importance of Povington ball clay, with no alternative source available.

The proposal would result in some habitat loss; however, mitigation and enhancement measures, including a five-year establishment period and 30-year management, would deliver long-term ecological benefits secured through a LEMP. While the potential loss of three veteran trees was acknowledged as regrettable, officers considered that exceptional circumstances applied and suitable compensation would be secured.

Landscape harm during extraction was recognised but considered acceptable subject to mitigation, restoration and the provision of a Landscape Enhancement Fund. Transport impacts, including HGV movements, were controlled and deemed not unacceptable. Impacts relating to noise, dust, lighting and the built environment were acceptable or capable of being controlled by condition.

Hydrological, flood risk and water quality impacts were assessed as negligible to minor, with no adverse impact on nearby sensitive habitats. In heritage terms, any harm to designated assets, including Creech Grange and its Registered Park and Garden, was concluded to be less than substantial. Archaeological impacts would be mitigated through a programme of investigation secured by condition.

Overall, officers advised that, without the proposed mitigation, the development would conflict with policy; however, the submitted package of measures rendered the proposal acceptable. The public benefits, including the strategic importance of the mineral, outweighed identified harms. The officer's recommendation was to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and a completion of a S106 agreement.

Public Participation

Mr Grant Scott addressed the Committee in support of the application, outlining the national importance of Ball Clay as a rare mineral of significant value to the UK economy, particularly in the production of high-quality ceramics, and its role in supporting sustainable development and infrastructure such as the modernisation of the national grid; he noted that Dorset's Ball Clay was located within environmentally sensitive areas requiring careful management. Mr Scott highlighted that the industry supported hundreds of local jobs with employment expected to continue for at least the next decade and advised that extensive consultation had resulted in a sustainable proposal, concluding that the working relationship between the operator and Council officers was amongst the most constructive he had observed.

Members questions and comments

- Members raised the importance of water retention and emphasised the need to fully consider hydrology within the proposal
- Members queried the proposed transport system, in particular the level and management of traffic movements
- Concern was expressed regarding the protection of trees, which were identified as important assets, and Members emphasised that all reasonable steps should be taken to preserve them

- Members highlighted that veteran trees were of significant ecological value, noting their ability to support thousands of species
- The importance of Ball Clay extraction as a mineral of significant value was acknowledged
- Clarification was sought on the timing and triggers for restoration of the site
- Members queried whether the discovery of additional Ball Clay could result in a future application to extend extraction, potentially delaying site restoration.
- Concerns were raised in respect of the proposed haulage route, particularly regarding safety for all road users and whether increased vehicle movements would have a detrimental impact.
- Members questioned whether sufficient consideration had been given to the potential for the development to disrupt watercourses.
- Clarification was requested on how the proposed charge per acre had been calculated.
- Members sought reassurance in respect of transport enforcement and monitoring, including measures to ensure that roads and surrounding areas would not be adversely affected, and queried controls such as wheel washing and sheeting of materials.
- In relation to HGV movements, Members queried whether Ministry of Defence (MOD) use of the area would impact the proposed 'one in, one out' system.
- It was noted that the 'one in, one out' arrangement would apply to a route not used by the military, and would be restricted to vehicles associated with the extraction site
- Cllr David Tooke commended the officer report and presentation. He advised that, whilst he had held some initial concerns, he had been reassured by the information provided
- Members noted that the area was already subject to congestion and sought clarification on the proposed vehicle routes and the destination of the extracted material
- Concern was raised that HGVs may utilise a route via Sandford, which Members considered inappropriate due to the presence of schools and its function as a main tourist route; a preference was expressed for vehicles to travel in the alternative direction, noting that route as being more suited to heavy vehicles, including military use, and less impactful on urban areas
- Cllr Scott Florek highlighted environmental concerns but acknowledged that these had been comprehensively addressed by the officer within the presentation.
- Cllr Duncan Sowry-House commented that the proposal had been undertaken sensitively and commended the applicants for their cooperative approach throughout the process.

Having had the opportunity to discuss the merits of the application and an understanding of all this entailed; having considered the officer's report and presentation; the written representatives; and what they had heard at the meeting, a motion to **APPROVE** the officer's recommendation to **GRANT** as recommended, was proposed by Cllr David Tooke, and seconded by Cllr David Taylor, subject to conditions set out in the officer report, update sheet with delegated authority to officers to make minor amendments to the conditions where necessary.

Decision: That planning permission be granted for the reasons set out in Section 19 of the Officer's Report, subject to the conditions detailed in the Update Sheet, with delegated authority to officers to make minor amendments to the conditions where necessary.

47. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

48. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.47 am

Chairman

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