



Strategic Planning Committee

Temporary planning permission for an extension to Chard Junction Quarry at Westford Park Farm for the winning and working of approximately 930,000 tonnes of sand and gravel with progressive restoration to agriculture and nature conservation, inclusive of a new internal haul road and the retention of the existing mineral processing facilities and silt lagoons for a period of seven years.

UPDATE SHEET

Date of Meeting: 6th September 2021

Portfolio Holder: Cllr D Walsh, Planning

Lead Officer: Robert Jefferies

Application Number WD/D/19/000451

Site address – Chard Junction Quarry, Westford Park Farm, Thorncombe, Chard

Proposal - Temporary planning permission for an extension to Chard Junction Quarry at Westford Park Farm for the winning and working of approximately 930,000 tonnes of sand and gravel with progressive restoration to agriculture and nature conservation, inclusive of a new internal haul road and the retention of the existing mineral processing facilities and silt lagoons for a period of seven years

Applicant name – Aggregate Industries UK Ltd

Ward Members – Cllr Simon Christopher

UPDATES

Following the deferment of this application at the Strategic Planning Committee on 12th July 2021 the following representations/responses have been received:

Tatworth and Forton Parish Council

Tatworth and Forton Parish Council has resolved to strongly oppose the planning application WD/D/19/000451 – Westford Park Farm, and recommends refusal for the following reasons:

1. As it is a major new development in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework applies. This states that such a development must meet an 'exceptional circumstances' test. Since the need for the stone is not primarily for construction but for decorative purposes, the Council considers there is not a sufficient reason for severely damaging an AONB.

2. The Council notes that Natural England and Dorset's AONB team both oppose the application.

3. The proposed site is some distance from the existing sites and It is in an area which has little impact on the view from Dorset. However the site is wide open to the north and is visible, and hence audible, to a large area of Tatworth and Forton. The Council believes that the visual impact of the development will result in harm to the visual amenity and landscape character of the AONB, as seen from Tatworth and Forton.

4. The Council is aware that the noise from the nearby railway can sometimes be heard in the Tatworth and Forton area, but the noise from the proposed development will be substantially more, and constant, for at least 6 days per week.

5. The process of the removal of 453 metres of long-standing hedges and other damage to the natural environment, which itself has developed for many centuries, will result in the destruction of wildlife.

6. The Council understands that there would be a substantial traffic issue resulting in the HGV movements as follows (for a 6 day) week:

	DAILY TRUCKS INBOUND	TOTAL DAILY MOVEMENTS IN + OUT
AVERAGE	50	100
MAXIMUM	110	220

The addition of this volume of traffic to the existing traffic on the streets of Tatworth and Forton, particularly Station Road and Perry Street, would be intolerable for the 7 years period of the proposed extraction.

7. This site was not included in the Draft Minerals Sites Plan and the examining Inspector at the time concluded that the currently planned supply of aggregate was adequate to meet demand. Therefore, because this is not an allocated sand and gravel site, 'exceptional circumstances' must be shown to be in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council does not believe that this test has been met. Somerset does not quarry now, but relies on Devon, and Devon Council supports this application, but says that "if permission were refused the knock-on effect for Devon is likely to be quite small."

8. The Council is very concerned about the lack of a robust consultation process on this specific application. It is

acknowledged that there were public exhibitions in 2018 but there has been very little consultation since then. The vast majority of the residents of Chilson, Chilson Common, Perry Street, South Chard and Tatworth are unaware of the way in which this application is now being pursued.

9. The Council notes that there are several issues that have not been addressed and therefore questions the validity of the planning application process. These are:

- i) flood risk assessment,
- ii) silt press,
- iii) archaeology survey,
- iv) noise and dust suppression
- v) site restoration and landscaping
- vi) water quality monitoring.

The Council further notes that without these key issues being addressed and scrutinised, the application must be rejected.

Dorset Council Conservation and Design Officer – No objection

CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England)

CPRE vigorously opposes this application for a new large quarry at Westford Park Farm. This is not an 'extension', as billed in the application, but a *new* quarry with a road for haulage. There is a distinct space between the old and new quarry which includes a road.

It must be emphasised that this application for the Major development of a quarry is in the *Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*. As is pointed out by Richard Brown of the Dorset AONB Partnership: 'alongside National Park status, AONB designation is the highest level of landscape protection available within England and Wales and therefore affords considerable weight to the conservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the area'. Quarrying for non essential gravel and sand etc will do untold harm. The area will never be returned to its present state. It will not 'conserve or enhance' its natural beauty. The NPPF (para 172) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs.

In addition, there will be destruction of a significant amount of old hedgerows and trees. There will be considerable noise and dust pollution to local people. Some live very close to the edge of the proposed quarrying. There will be a great increase in HGV traffic which will add to these problems - and, again, this is in the AONB!

There is no requirement for this aggregate - this site was not included in the Dorset Minerals Plan.

The report by Natural England confirms the above arguments.

Please reject this application.

Representations

Further representation has been made on behalf of the occupiers of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The representations make the following points:

- The application is not valid as the description of the development is incorrect and misleading. The site is currently not linked to existing quarry land. The site is an open piece of protected (AONB) land. Therefore, should it be considered a new application (not an extension).
- Thorncombe Parish Council should be re-consulted. Thorncombe Parish council approved the proposal on the basis of the site being opposite the now disused Milk Factory (please refer to their minutes of the meeting).
- The proposed 'extension' of the quarry is causing extreme stress and anxiety to this family who are living just 50 metres from the proposed site. The noise, pollution and potential danger on the small roads with HGV's passing through will blight the above property and its associated land.

Request to amend duration of development

Following the deferment of this application at the Strategic Planning Committee on 12th July 2021 the applicant has requested that the duration of the development be extended by two months to reflect this delay. Officers consider this to be a reasonable request.

Condition 3 (paragraph 17.0) of the report previously stated *"The development, subject of this permission, shall be limited to the period ending 31 August 2028."*

Condition 3 now reads *"The development, subject of this permission, shall be limited to the period ending 31 October 2028."*