

BARFORD SHERBOURNE AND WASPERTON JOINT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee
held in Barford Memorial Hall on Mon 23 Jan 23

Present:	Cllr T Merrygold, (Chairman) Cllr: J D Billingham, R Clay, Mrs D Haynes, G Jackson, Mrs L M Jones, M J Metcalfe, Mrs R Newsome, M J Sheard*
Apologies:	Cllr: J V Murphy,

*Vice Cllr J V Murphy,

Opening

103 The meeting opened at 7:30pm.

Public Participation

104 Four members of the public attended the meeting.

105 Those four (Malcolm Eykyn, Val Eykyn, Clinton Locker, Rose Lord) each gave a presentation on a single aspect of the application, a combination of which gave a persuasive argument in support of an objection to WDC/22CM008.

Planning Applications

106	Application No:	WDC/22CM008
	Applicant:	Smiths Concrete Limited
	Proposal:	Proposed sand & gravel quarry -restore to agriculture & biodiversity enhancement
	Location:	Land south of Wasperton Farm, Wellesbourne Road, Wasperton, Warwickshire, CV35 8EA
	JPC Decision:	Members of the JPC Planning Committee were unanimous in their objection to the proposal and bemoaned the fact that they were unable to see any comments on the WCC website from any of the other consultees or any local residents. Normally when considering Planning Applications the JPC considers the views of members of the public present and the comments already added to the WDC Planning Portal when making decisions. The details of the objection are shown at Annex A.

Closure

107 There being no other items on the agenda the meeting was closed at 9:20pm

Smiths Concrete Planning Application

The Barford Sherbourne and Wasperton JPC objects to the planning application on the following grounds:

- **Loss of High Quality Agricultural Land.**
 - In an environment where we should be growing as much food in this country as possible, we believe that the loss of good quality agricultural land is not acceptable. Recent planning applications for non-agricultural use – solar farms – have been refused and we believe this application should be similarly refused. The Application tries to make the point that any loss of agricultural land is only temporary, the land that is not actually being quarried will still be farmed, and when the scheme is finished a portion of the site will be restored to quality better than it is now.
 - ‘Temporary’ in this instance is an interesting concept. The planned quarry is expected to last 10 to 15 years, and by their own admission may take even longer, then the final phase needs to be restored – which they expect to take between 18-24 Months (Planning Statement – Section 8.66). In total the quarry is likely to be in operation for 20 years. Not exactly temporary!
 - The land not being quarried will be farmed – this doesn’t mean that 11 of the phases are farmed while one phase is being worked, as soil from the worked phase is stored on another phase, while at the same time another phase is being restored. Looking through the phased plans – almost 50% of the land will be out of agricultural use for the duration.
 - **This is therefore a loss of half of the agricultural land for about 20 years.**
 - Finally Phase 1 will be left as a lagoon – as a biodiversity benefit and this removes about **10% of the land from agriculture – permanently.**
- **Highways and Safety**
 - The JPC object to the nature and location of the proposed junction on the A429 to access the quarry.
 - While the applicant makes the point that the A429 has a speed limit of 50 mph, but average traffic speeds are ‘slightly’ higher than the speed limit (Planning Statement – Section 10.39). We believe this deliberately understates the case as traffic consistently runs faster than 50 mph – much nearer to 60 mph. Installing a traffic light controlled junction there would introduce a Right Hand Junction in what is a fairly clear, straight section of ‘effectively’ 60 mph road, and we believe this could lead to serious accidents. Section 3.7.3 of the Transport Assessment states there have been four ‘slight severity’ collisions and no ‘serious severity or fatal collisions’ recorded. This may be true with collisions on a straight, clear, section of road. The plan is to introduce effectively two, very slow, right turns – one for heavy vehicles heading north, turning right into the site, and one for heavy vehicles exiting the site and turning right to head north towards the M40. Any collision between a passenger vehicle and a heavy vehicle turning right is likely to be much more serious and we foresee a number of serious, if not fatal accidents, over the working life of the quarry.
 - We also believe that this junction will exacerbate existing problems with the Wasperton / A429 junction just south of this planned junction. Wasperton residents / visitors already have problems trying to turn right out of Wasperton to head south on the A429. The addition of over 200 heavy vehicle movements on this section of road will only make this worse – it will take some time for the trucks to reach average speed, causing bunching and tailbacks behind them, meaning Wasperton residents will have to wait for even longer queues to pass the junction before they can exit.
 - The Transport Assessment shows that traffic volume is expected to increase by at least 10% by 2033 but we believe that this is grossly under-estimated, and more development is planned for Wellesbourne, most of which heads north to commute to work. In addition to this there are well known expansion plans for the Warwick University site on the A429 (ex HRI site) which will add further volume.
 - All of this together will add much more traffic to the route than is considered in the Planning Application and will add to the congestion and possible risk, from installing a junction on this busy road.

- **Air Quality**
 - The JPC believes this application should be refused on the grounds of the effects it will have on the quality of the air, mainly in the Barford area. Although the application includes some statistics from test receptors, these are all in the southern half of the village. WCC and the Applicant are well aware of the concerns of the local residents of the possible detrimental effects of breathing in PM10 and PM2.5 particles during the life of the quarry –for elderly people, those with breathing difficulties, and particularly for children – as the school and the main King George’s Field playground is in the path of the prevailing winds.
 - The Applications states in Air Quality Assessment – Section 2.2.1 in extracts from the NPPF which include the statement:
 - *Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality.*
 - There is nothing in this Application which demonstrates how they will improve air quality and indeed it seeks to minimize the issue of airborne dust but doesn’t provide any solid evidence. None of their monitoring has covered areas around the school. They only seek to try and prove that the peak dust production is from agriculture during the summer harvest period. While this may be true, this does not contain the silica particles that worry the residents. Also to state that their dust production will be lower than that of agriculture is a false premise.
 - Approximately half the land will be in agricultural production. It is reasonable to assume the same seasonal pattern of production, even on a reduced amount of land. The dust produced from quarrying is additional to this, meaning the total amount of dust is unlikely to diminish and the overall makeup of it may change.
- **Appearance**
 - THE JPC believe this Application should be refused on the grounds of the major changes it will make to the appearance it will make to the landscape along the A429, from the southern junction of the Wellesbourne road and A429 down as far as Wasperton Farm. The Application will make considerable changes to the appearance of the whole length of the site.. Currently the fields are bounded by relatively low level hedgerows with views beyond, across the fields to the hills rising in the background.
 - The plan is to build bunds of soil along the A429 to both hide the workings and act as a barrier to mitigate the distribution of dust onto, and along the A429. While the building of the bunds is put forward as a benefit, the effect will be to produce a long green barrier alongside the eastern side of the A429 which will completely hide the view and change the character of the area. It will be akin to driving along a road in a cutting.
 - While the Applicant argues that this is all temporary, in practice this will be the landscape for between 15 and 20 years which for many people in the community will seem like a permanent feature.
- **Noise**
 - The JPC objects to the Application on the grounds of the noise nuisance that will result from the operation. The noise produced by the trucks going to/from the site will be partly masked by the planned installation of the 2m high bunds along the access road and the distance from the nearest dwellings means this will probably not be too intrusive and will have to compete with the noise levels from the daytime A429 traffic.
 - The main concerns are around the noise generated by the machinery working the quarry, particularly at the northern end of the site phases 2, 3, 4, 5 and 11, and the noise from the pumping work that will be needed to drain each phase into the lagoon.
 - The A429 will not provide a noise screen between these phases and the residents of Barford who will suffer from noise pollution during the day.
 - It is not clear from the Application what hours the pumping will need to operate but as the sand and gravel is below the level of the water table it is likely that pumping will need to be a round-the-clock operation providing a permanent background level of noise which will be unacceptable to the residents.

In the unlikely event that this Planning Application is granted, the JPC would like to see the following Planning Conditions applied to the Permission and associated mitigation issues put in place as mandatory:

- Air Quality Monitoring
 - As stated above, the main health concern of the local residents is around the issue of airborne particles, in particular in relation to young children: the school and school grounds; the facilities in King George's Field (KGF) and the Scout Hut / Barford Youth and Community Centre.
 - The JPC wants an Air Quality Monitoring system to be set up as follows:
 - Cover the school and grounds, Scout Hut - BYCC and two areas of KGF – the children's playground and the MUGA
 - To be in place BEFORE any work starts on the site setup to establish a Baseline Air Quality Measure for the areas.
 - These sites to be monitored continuously throughout the operation of the quarry.
 - Monitoring to be checked by a company, independent of the Applicant and the reports to go direct to the JPC and the School without any input/change by the Applicant.
 - If at any point during the monitoring period the Baseline Air Quality should deteriorate, then the Applicant to cease operations while whatever mitigation measures deemed necessary are implemented
 - The Applicant to bear all the costs of monitoring, reporting and rectifying any problems.
- Dust suppression
 - Some dust suppression / mitigation measures are mentioned in the Application but the JPC believes these need to be more rigidly enforced than is described.
 - The Application recognizes that dust can be generated from both the quarry digging itself, plus potentially blown off the soil storage bunds, some of which will be 5m high, used to store the topsoil and subsoil that is excavated to access underlying sand and gravel deposits.
 - Section 8.76 of the Planning Statement says these bunds '*reduce the potential for winds to generate dust over the working areas*' whereas in fact they provide a pile of soil 5m high which could generate dust.
 - Section 8.90 states *Long term soil storage bunds will be allowed to grass over to give a greened appearance.*
 - **The JPC believes that this is not acceptable and wants a Planning Condition included that all storage bunds will be grassed over as early as possible to both provide the green appearance and assist in the suppression of dust.**
 - Another potential source of dust generation over a greater distance is the heavy trucks themselves. The Application states that the site will be equipped with a wheel wash to wash the wheels and underside of the vehicles before exiting the site onto the highway. Those JPC members who made the site visit to Wolston saw this working but not as described in the Application which. The Application describes trucks going through the wheel-wash, then being inspected underneath, and if necessary going through the wheel wash again. This did not happen at Wolston and having visited the site on a number of occasions, once for the JPC site visit, and a couple as an observer, there were mud trails on the approach roads. When dried this is then dispersed into the atmosphere but other passing trucks and general traffic.
 - As stated under the section on the A429, this road is subject to considerable amounts of traffic, which the Applicant knows will increase and the JPC believes these predictions to be on the low side. Any mud spread onto the road surface by the sand and gravel trucks, once dried will quickly be turned to dust and distributed by the steady traffic flows of the A429.
 - **The JPC wants the Applicant to come up with a much more robust method of cleaning the wheels and under-sides of the trucks, than is evident at Wolston and for this to be added as a Planning Condition.**
- Restoration of Agricultural Land
 - The Application covers the restoration of the agricultural land in some detail saying it will all be restored to its original height and condition and in some areas the height may be increased by up to 1m to improve drainage. Some of the land will be improved to BMV.

- On the face of this, it all sounds great until we read section 8.180 of the Planning Statement which states:
 - *8.180 If a shortage of materials did arise, then three alternative restoration options arise: -*
 - *Restore to low level. This would create arable fields on the basal clay, supported by an artificial drainage system to remove collected rainwater. Agricultural quality may **reduce** [my emphasis] but arable production would still be a realistic possibility;*
 - *Restore more areas to conservation habitat. This would result in loss of agricultural land but would increase in biodiversity across the Site;*
 - *Restore the Site to the proposed scheme but over a period long enough to allow filling to occur.*
- This section gives the Applicant a get out from restoring all the land to its original quality by playing the 'bio-diversity' card which is merely greenwash, or by extending the time taken to restore the land, and ultimately the whole duration of the quarry.
- **The JPC wants this section removed and a Planning Condition included that ALL agricultural land be restored to its original level and condition, or better, with the sole exception of Phase 1 which will end up as the lagoon.**
- A429 – Wasperton Junction and Cycle Path Upgrade
 - To avoid exacerbating the problems experienced by the Wasperton residents and visitors at the Wasperton / A429 Junction, **the JPC wants the Applicant to work with WCC Highways to design, fund and implement improvements to the Wasperton junction.**
 - There is a very narrow footpath from Wasperton heading north up the A429 towards Barford. This is barely wide enough for a single pedestrian, let alone two abreast, or a cyclist safely passing a pedestrian. The additional heavy traffic on the A429 will add to the already considerable risks to cyclists and the general discomfort to pedestrians. There is already a shared pedestrian / cycle path from the Barford north junction to the M40 island.
 - **The JPC would like this Wasperton path upgraded to provide a safe path for cyclists and pedestrians to travel to Barford and access both the facilities in Barford and link up with other cycle way.**
- Permissive Bridleway
 - The Application describes the Permissive Bridleway in some detail as a benefit to the residents. Section 4.41 of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment states that this *'will be retained in the restoration scheme'*. But it is not clear if this means that this will be permanent – i.e. after the completion of the restoration.
 - **The JPC wants a Planning Condition applied to make this Permissive bridleway, permanent at the end of the quarry working and restoration, and for this to be linked into the other local footpaths and Rights of Way so the residents have a permanent benefit from the operation of the quarry.**
- Aftercare
 - Sections 8.219 to 8.227 of the Planning Statement provide details of the proposed Aftercare. While reading well, this does not demonstrate real commitment to deliver and the JPC and residents have no real faith that once the quarrying is finished, and the economic benefits to the Applicant have ceased, that this will happen.
 - **The JPC wants to see fully detailed Aftercare plans included as an enforceable Planning Condition. The making of the Permissive Bridleway permanent, as well as providing a benefit to the local residents, would enable them see if the Aftercare plan is being implemented, and if not - the plan must contain processes for those undertaking the Aftercare to be contacted and the work undertaken, and if necessary enforced by Planning.**

Possible CIL or Section 106 Contributions

If this application is to be subject to CIL or Section 106 Contributions, then the JPC would like funds awarded to contribute towards the following in the Joint Parishes:

- Allowing the public access to the lagoon following the restoration, with a contribution to its upkeep to continue after the Aftercare period, to give the residents time to decide how to enjoy it, and if necessary, help to manage it.
- Upgrading of the Wasperton to Barford footpath, as described, if this is not completed as part of the site setup.
- A contribution towards the Barford Youth and Community Centre
- The Sherbourne – Fulbrook Lane /A429 lane junction suffers from the same problems as described for the Wasperton junction and would benefit from a suitably designed junction to improve exiting from Fulbrook Lane and turning right – south onto the A429.

Barford Sherbourne and Wasperton Joint Parish Council
Planning Committee
23 January 2023