

BUILDWAS PARISH COUNCIL
EXTRAORDINARY MEETING
MONDAY 27TH JANUARY 2020, 7:30PM
BUILDWAS VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllr L Pratt (Chair), Cllr J Grainger, Cllr J Heath, Cllr S Heath, Cllr V Morgan, Cllr R Wilcox

In attendance: Mrs S Morris (Clerk), Cllr C Wild (Shropshire Councillor), Mr I Kilby (Shropshire Council Planning), Mr G French (Shropshire Council Planning), 21 members of the public

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr S Ratcliffe

2. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None.

3. TO DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND AGREE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUBMISSION TO SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

- (i) Reference: 19/05509/MAW Proposed quarry to east of Much Wenlock Road
- (ii) Reference: 19/05560/OUT Ironbridge Power Station, Buildwas Road

The Chair invited Mr French to outline the planning applications and the process for responding to the applications. The sand and gravel application (19/05509/MAW) had been validated with a consultation deadline of 21 days, but Mr French confirmed that Shropshire Council would be happy to extend this in line with the 56 day period for the outline application.

The sand and gravel excavation would cover a 5 year period in which 400,000 tonnes per annum would be moved from the site, with a minimum of three quarters moved by rail via the Albert Edward bridge. The bridge would be strengthened by Network Rail to accommodate the movements on and off the site. The remaining quarter of materials would be moved to local markets by road. The reports submitted by the applicant, Harworth, indicated that vehicle movement would be controlled and managed and that there would be highways improvements made. The reports stated that equivalent movements had been historically accommodated on the local highway when the power station was operational and during demolition work on the site. Harworth had stated that the bulk of the material moved would go via the bypass into Telford & West Midlands, but had not precluded some moving out through Buildwas to local markets. Harworth was working to minimise visibility and maximise screening. The application included an Environmental Statement which includes a number of environmental reports. The noise and dust initial evaluations concluded that there shouldn't be any noise or dust impact with the screening, proposed mitigations, and the distance of the site from the nearest properties. The planning team would look further at these assertions with environmental health. If the outline

application for the development were not approved, the mineral extraction application still indicates that Harworth can complete a high quality restoration of the excavation site.

Mr French explained that the Shropshire Council officers were in attendance at the meeting to listen to what residents wished to raise so that the planning officers could factor this into their considerations. He encouraged those present to submit comments on the Shropshire Council website. Stakeholder engagement had taken place with Harworth but nothing had been predetermined. There was a presumption that the outline plan would be taken forward as part of the SAMDEV planning document if approved.

The Chair opened to meeting to questions from members of the public, shown below in bold font.

Is the outline application dependent upon the gravel application? The developers need a level development platform to construct the houses on the western part of the site, and it is proposed to achieve this through recovering the sand and gravel. If it is not possible to develop the sand and gravel sites, Harworth would have to look into how to level the topography of the site prior to development. This would be a significant obstacle and require rethink of a number of assumptions in the outline application, but some changes could be accommodated within the application as it was an outline application.

Will the same Shropshire Council Committee members deal with both applications? Isn't this a conflict of interests, since the applications interrelate? Both applications will go to the Planning Committee. If the Committee refuse the mineral application, the outline application would be deferred to a later Committee date so that the applicant has the time to consider their options. The two applications may have to be de-coupled but it doesn't prevent the Committee from considering both applications. The Committees are legally advised and would be advised as such if there was any perceived conflict of interest. Committee members are expert on responding to planning applications and have experience of responding to mineral applications.

There are already concerns about the B4380 through Leighton and Eaton Constantine, which would increase if there was an increase in HGV traffic. Will strict planning conditions be put on the application so HGVs cannot use the route, and how will this be monitored? Shropshire Council could impose routing restrictions through a legal agreement. The non-technical summary by Harworth does not preclude movement via B4380 to local markets, and the planning team will look at whether the applicant's aspiration to take some loads along this route is something that Shropshire Council could support.

You said that it will have minimal noise and dust implication? The Environmental Impact statement (available online) concludes that given the distance, layout and mitigation measures proposed, there would not be an issue with regard to noise and dust. This was not being taken at face value, and the planning team will be working with regulatory services to look at this further, along with Telford & Wrekin Council.

Where did Harworth get their information to say there won't be dust and noise?

There are particular methodologies for creating air and noise quality reports. The detailed reports are available on the website alongside the planning application.

There are many lengthy documents with the application, but we have only 21 days to respond.

The application initially went out with the standard 21 day deadline, but the planning officers were receptive to an extension to the deadline. Officers will be working with the Parish Council to explain in detail what the consultees are saying with regard to the issues of concern that have been raised. Residents were encouraged to submit their concerns in their responses to the application even if they don't have technical expertise; if themes such as noise come out across a number of responses, planning may be able to provide a more focused response to these issues. There were other quarries in the local area that have not had significant problems with noise.

The other local quarriers are working at a greater depth than this proposal.

Each quarry is different, but the Council don't tend to have amenity complaints from them. The key issue in the proposal will be the availability of water for on-site suppression and planning officers will have these discussions with the applicants. There are many mechanisms we can and will employ to minimise dust, if the scheme is found to be acceptable.

The immediate backdrop on the site gives nothing to absorb the sound. The plans show screening mechanism to reduce impact. We haven't experienced problems with other sites, but will be asking the right questions of the technical consultees to identify concerns. It is helpful if we can gather local knowledge e.g. of topography.

We already have quarry in the parish, albeit not working, but we have lorries coming in from 7am to 7pm on weekdays and 7am to 1pm on Saturday; will the same timeframes be in place for the excavation? We may be looking at more stringent controls than when the permissions were given on that site.

There are issues of road and drain cleaning with the existing site. Local knowledge like this is key and Shropshire Council will maintain an interest in the site if it proceeds, and continue the relationship with the Parish Council through the operational stage to take concerns from public either directly or through the Parish Council. Officers had not heard of the issues of dust or working hours from Buildwas Quarry and can now communicate with the owners on these issues.

Why are they moving the junction away from the sand quarry road? The current position is not optimal due to a bend in the road; the vehicles need a wider visibility splay. We need to make sure vehicles access in an appropriate way e.g. not revving engines and shining lights in, as this may be an issue for the amenity of the property on the junction.

Will JPE still be operating the quarry? We understand Harworth intend to employ JPE for the groundworks on the quarry site. ***JPE have just been fined and had issues with a quarry they have failed to complete and restore.*** There were particular issues with that site, which is in Staffordshire. In the case of this site, a

purpose built access is being created, but we need to look closely at the suitability of the current access and amenity effects of the proposed new access.

If the extracted materials can't be taken out by railway, how many vehicles are we looking at? If railway bridge can't be used, the applicant would have to re-evaluate the mineral levels on site as moving it all by road would be too slow, nor have they said in the applications that they would increase the number of vehicles on the road.

Does the noise rule apply now with the demolition of the power station? It is subject to a Construction Management Plan which was approved under the application to demolish the power station and continues to be enforced. Officers are aware that there have been some infringements to that in terms of hours of working and these are being investigated by Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils. There appear to be intermittent ongoing problems and the Council has engaged with Harworth over this as it is not satisfactory for work to be taking place outside of the allotted time.

Will they be working weekends on the new quarry? The application is proposing 7am-6:30pm on weekdays and 7am-1pm Saturday, with no Sunday or Bank Holiday working which is broadly similar to the current conditions for demolition. This has not been agreed, but is included in the application.

The Planning Statement, under Transport, says that they don't need to do an Environmental Impact Statement as there will be no more lorries than when the power station was operational. I think they should need to have one as this is a separate thing. The applicants has completed an Environmental Impact Statement for both applications. They have stated that they don't need to do a Traffic Impact Statement as traffic levels are equivalent to historic levels. Whether we accept their decision that there is no need for a full traffic assessment has not yet been agreed. We need to make sure that assumptions about traffic in the outline application also factor in the assumptions in the minerals application. More information is being gathered on the outline application at the moment; the traffic modelling is being refined and completed and there will be a further re-consultation on the conclusions of this.

Are the same roads being put in for the quarry going to be used for the extra traffic the development will bring to our community? If there are 1,000 homes, there will be 2,000 extra cars. The roads are not going to be able to take it. We have already had a serious amount of crashes as it is now around the bypass junction. We are dealing with a 15 year project for the outline application and 5 years for the mineral extraction. Housing, if the outline application proceeds, will be staggered and there would be a 3-year overlap between when the first houses begin to be occupied and the mineral extraction ceases. We need to look at the interrelationship between quarry traffic and development traffic. No more than 100,000 tonnes will leave the quarry each year and we will condition that, and can use CCTV at junctions to determine which way vehicles are turning.

What is the plan for dealing with the extra traffic? A comprehensive traffic evaluation process is going on now. The initial findings are in the Environmental Statement for the outline application with further information awaited in the next

month or so. ***We are concerned that we will end up with rows of traffic lights like the Lightmoor development which impacts negatively on those with properties near the lights. Buildwas Bridge at 5-6pm is already at capacity.***

Lots of people are worried about speed of and increase in traffic; could Harworth bring in highways changes/mitigation before starting the quarrying work e.g. speed limit on Much Wenlock road, mitigation on road to help reduce speed? We could put this to Harworth and question at what stage they are proposing to deliver the highways mitigations.

Some residents expressed that they would rather the highways changes take place later, e.g. as the roundabout would be outside their house. Some residents expressed that drivers take no notice of speed limits nor Vehicle Activated Signs that are currently in place. There are many options for mitigation on roads. We need to look at the mitigations the applicant is proposing and whether there is opportunity to consider further work.

You will have on record about speed on Much Wenlock Road on which we live; the last figures showed an average speed past our house of 72mph with a maximum speed of 102mph. We have been told by Shropshire Council that they have put in a 50mph limit but it makes no difference as it is not monitored. We have requested double white lines to stop overtaking but this was turned down as it would prevent people from overtaking slow moving farm vehicles. There is clearly a pre-existing problem on the road and Councillor Wild has suggested that we could put in some mitigation before adding more vehicles to the highway. The proposed mitigation measures are in the Highways Impact Assessment in the outline application – a series of plans showing the proposals for individual junctions – and the computer modelling regarding anticipated traffic flows will inform detailed traffic mitigation measures.

This site is nothing like Harworth's previous sites particularly from traffic infrastructure point of view. They have done a fantastic job with brownfield sites. Why are we building on green field, opposite Buildwas Abbey, in a World Heritage Site, with a significant traffic impact? If we stop the development, we won't have these problems. Shropshire Council has taken to the Cabinet to have this site, including some of the greenfield land, as a Strategic Development Site. There are cost of developing greenfield, but the applicant would be unable to fund the cost of demolition and rehabilitation of the brownfield site without building some housing on the green field site. We have to assess the application, and at the moment, Shropshire Council has agreed to support development of the western area from a policy perspective, but if there are additional environmental limitations, we will be raising questions with Harworth.

When Harworth spoke to us, they said have to do that work before they can afford demolition, but have now changed this and doing demolition first.

Is the agricultural land on the site rated Grade 2 and Grade 3a. Yes, around 22 hectares of land, which is high quality versatile land. ***I understand the Council has an obligation to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land in its county; if this land is Grade 2, how could you even consider development on that land?*** Planning balance requires consideration of all factors, which pull in

different directions. Loss of this land is a material consideration to be weighed into the balance, but rehabilitation of the power station site has benefits for the wider area, including economically. We have to weigh up all factors and no decision has yet been taken; we want the feedback that is coming in.

You mentioned the need to develop the western site to fund demolition, which indicates a preconception of the demolition application. There are no preconceptions; our job is to ensure open, fair and comprehensive evaluation of the application. Cost isn't a material consideration generally, but where it has an impact on deliverability, financial offset considerations can legitimately be taken into account.

There are no plans to put a surgery in the new development; how will the existing doctors surgery cope? These are areas of essential core infrastructure and capacity has to be there for the number of people over the period of the scheme. Healthcare provision will need to be factored in. We know there are capacity issues with existing facilities and we are having detailed discussions with Telford & Wrekin regarding this.

What type of houses will they be? Will they be sustainable? Shropshire Council has declared a Climate Emergency and the Green Councillor is leading on the Climate Emergency Response Plan. We anticipate higher standards of house building sustainability will be part of this and will be expecting the highest standards of sustainable building as part of the application.

If the housing goes ahead, will it be carbon neutral? Should there be some offset, e.g. require that it is carbon neutral, given the significant financial gains (£100million) Harworth will make from the development? At the moment, we have an outline application. We fully support the objectives of constructing highly sustainable houses. If the outline application is approved, reserved matters come into effect which will include specifications for the construction and it would be at this stage that we would seek detailed commitments regarding sustainability, and make clear our expectations to Harworth. We can't require that it be carbon neutral

As this is a windfall site, not included in SAMDEV policy MD5, is there a definite market for the 1.9million tonnes? What will happen if there is no market? SAMDEV Policy MD5 does allow for use of windfall sites, provided that they don't have adverse environmental consequences and don't prevent the bringing forward of other existing allocated sites and is an identified need for the mineral. We will be reviewing these three key tests as part of the response to the mineral application.

There is mention of possible restoration as an ecology park. When does that get decided and will the Parish Council have involvement in the discussion about what it is restored to, how will it be maintained, financed and who will be responsible for it? Similarly, there is lots of open space in the outline application; how will that be financed and maintained? About 46% total area of the site is not proposed for development. This is a huge opportunity to enhance biodiversity and improve public access. Normally a housing scheme would have a management company that residents pay in to for maintenance, but given the extensive amount of green space, this site would likely need something else in addition e.g. an endowment from the company. The Ecology department have been involved in detailed discussions. We can't condition things for more than 5 years but if we

impose a legal agreement, there is no time limit to what we ask for. High on the 'shopping list' is securing the green corridors and green areas within the site.

The Chair thanked the Shropshire Council officers for attending and emphasised that the Parish Council would like to hear the views of the community as they consider their response to the applications.

Meeting closed at 9:00pm.