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Your Ref: JWG/SLF-D5/2
My Ref: E/7/05/9018

7 September 2005

Dear Mr Gough

Ditchingham: Land of Norwich Road (B1332): Scoping Opinion for proposed sand and gravel quarry: Lafarge Aggregates Limited

I write further to the request for a formal Scoping Opinion to identify the information to be included in an Environmental Statement (ES) to accompany a planning application for the extraction of approximately 1.25 million tonnes of sand and gravel from a site in Ditchingham. I apologise for the delay in this reply.

The request for the Scoping Opinion was accompanied by an outline of the aspects which the applicant expects the ES to cover. As part of the preparation of the Scoping Opinion I have consulted a wide range of bodies and interested parties and they were sent copies of this information.

The aspects identified as to be included in the ES are comprehensive and the ES should include these matters and the information as listed. There are, however, a number of specific points which have been made by consultees with regard to this; there is also additional information which has been identified as needing to be provided. Using the layout submitted in the your letter for purposes of clarity, these points and additional information are as follows:

Soils and agricultural land quality

No comments.

Continued ...

Mr J W Gough
David L Walker Chartered Surveyors
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Landscape and visual amenity

The ES should particularly consider the impact of the proposal on the Broads, which is designated as of national park status and is 300m to the south of the proposal site. It should also look at the effect on Ditchingham Park, an English Heritage Grade 2 registered historic landscape immediately north of the B1332.

It should also give further clarification of the use of existing grade 3b agricultural land for wildlife habitat.

The County Council's Senior Landscape architect is Ms Judith Cantell on 01603 222768.

Ecology

The County Council has adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on Bio-Diversity and this should be taken into account when considering development and restoration. I attach a copy of this document for your use.

There are a number of Species and Habitat Action Plans which are currently in preparation for the Norfolk Bio-Diversity Action Plan (BAP) and further information can be found at www.norfolkbioiversity.org. Impacts on priority species within the BAP as well as those with protected status on site will need to be considered in the ES. For further information please contact the Norfolk Bio-diversity Partnership Co-ordinator, Mr Scott Perkin, on 01603 222112.

The application area is of ecological interest, being bordered by mature hedgerows and trees, with blocks of woodland also containing mature trees. These form important wildlife corridors and it should be considered whether working operations would have a detrimental impact on these. The ES should include an assessment of whether the hedgerows are important under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997); ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows are a Priority Habitat under the Norfolk Bio-Diversity Action Plan.

County Wildlife Site 131 – Ditchingham Park – lies to the north-east of the site on the other side of Norwich Road. I attach a copy of the citation for your information. County Wildlife Site 16 – Outney Common – is situated on then opposite side of the river from the application site. The ES should take account of the effects on these sites, particularly from operations such as de-watering or water washing.

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Grazing marsh habitat within the Waveney valley is also important for a number of Red Data Book species of molluscs and the impact of operations, including dewatering, on these will need to be included in the ES.

The ES should include baseline ecological information, including a review of existing records, records of protected species and surveys of flora and fauna which have been specifically carried out for the ES. It should include an assessment of the effects of the proposal (including loss of and damage to habitats and species) and mitigation measures (including the protection of any protected species on site and habitat creation and restoration). Restoration of the site itself could present opportunities to promote benefits to meet county targets for habitats and species.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

The ES should consider the impact on historic parkland, as identified above under the 'Landscape' section and the setting of any listed buildings and scheduled monument in the vicinity of the site

Hydrology and hydrogeology

The ES should include location of licensed surface and ground water abstractions, discharge consents, the location of potential sources of pollution and details of the methods by which water discharge from the site would be controlled.

It will also need to consider the impacts of abstraction and dewatering, if either are required, on the water environment. The appraisal of the impact will need to consider the development phase as well as post-development options. The Environment Agency advise that they will be happy to assist in developing the final document to cover these impacts and the contact is Lesley Hinchcliffe on 01473 706008.

The site is not within Flood Risk Zone 2 or 3, however a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) may be required to determine the effects of the development on the quantity of surface water discharged from the site. Details of how the peak flows are to be managed or attenuated to the current run-off rate should be submitted as part of a FRA or in the ES.

If no FRA is provided there should be justification for this decision.

The ES should take into account the existence of any contaminated land likely to be disturbed by the proposed workings and its treatment. For information on contaminated land you should contact South Norfolk Council on 01508 533633.

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Traffic and highways

The Highway Authority advise that there are no records of discussions with yourselves regarding access. They advise that the most appropriate means of access would be through a permanent realignment of the northern section of Fen Lane and this should be incorporated into the planning application.

A Transport Assessment will also be required.

The ES should consider any potential traffic-based severance issues, for example at Hedenham, arising from the likely or preferred routes for HGV traffic and means of mitigating this.

Environmental protection (including noise and dust)

The ES should set out the managerial and physical control measure by which the recommendations of best practice guidance set out in The effects of Dust from Surface Mineral Workings (1996) and Minerals Policy Statement 2 will be achieved. The dust management plan should include dust control measures for all operations up to and including re-seeding of the site after the quarrying activities have finished.

The specific noise monitoring reference criteria (such as Leq, L90 and time periods) will need to be agreed with the County Planning Authority, in discussion with the Environmental Health Officer, prior to the undertaking of any monitoring work involved in the acoustic report. A noise action plan will need to be developed which will address all of the items of concern raised by the acoustic report and the ES should cover this.

The ES should also address issues of vibration.

The ES should also include measures to prevent pollution, particularly from mud and silt entering local watercourses, particularly from highways. Silt and mud entering local watercourses is causing environmental damage locally and the application will need to ensure that roadways within the quarry, as well as the highways, do not allow suspended solids to enter the rivers.

The ES should include measures to prevent pollution, for example the bunding of oil tanks and contingency plans to be used in the event of an oil spill. The applicant should also be aware that in England the storage of oil (except waste oil) is regulated under the Control of Pollution (Oil Storage) (England) Regulations 2001. The Regulations apply to industrial, commercial and institutional sites storing more than 200 litres of oil.

The Environmental Health Officer for the area is based at South Norfolk Council. The contact details are Mr Mark Baker on 01508 533633.

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Working scheme and restoration

No comments

The development plan comprises the Approved Norfolk Structure Plan (1999), the Adopted Minerals Local Plan (2004) and the Bio-Diversity SPD (2004).

I hope the above has been helpful.

You will be aware that whilst I hope the above is comprehensive, there may be further information required and, under the Regulations, the County Council may request this in order to make a full assessment of the proposal.

Yours sincerely

Senior Planner (Development Control)