

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS REPORT ON PLANNING APPLICATION

For the attention of: CAROLE HAWORTH.

Application No : 23_00829_MCF.	Type :	List No :
Address :	Application Received : 3.4.23	
HORN CRAGG.		

The Planning Application is to quarry the site in 6 phases over 20 years over an area of approx. 5.9ha of the application site.

The submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal latest revision dated 23.12.22 includes a comprehensive study of the application site and Local Landscape Setting.

The study states in 2.3.6, Horn Crag forms a visually prominent feature within the local landscape, when viewed from certain directions, especially at close quarters, it is often subsumed into a predominately open and panoramic upland landscape when viewed from a distance. But due to its existing distinct vegetation it is of a distinct character within an area of predominately upland pasture.

The site lies on the western edge of the Rombalds Ridge Landscape Character Area in a landscape character type designated as Upland Pasture. The general conclusion are these areas have high sensitivity to change and high Landscape value.

The City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council Landscape Character SPD, dated 1.10.2008 states in 5.1 that the Rombalds Ridge Character Area can be regarded as very sensitive to change due to its strong character, high historic continuity, displaying a safe feeling of remoteness.

The site lies within an area designated as Upland Pasture, which has a strong sense of character and is in good condition with a policy to conserve with the following guidance:

- Conserve the simple patchwork of field systems bounded by stone walls. Restore hedge boundaries where applicable.
- Large scale tree planting is not appropriate to the character of the area, although small scale mixed shelter belts around farmsteads would be acceptable.
- Encourage the traditional management of grasslands as hay meadows to improve the biodiversity of the area.

The LVA states that the application site sensitivity to change is high and the existing vegetation and character roots Horn Crag firmly within its landscape setting whilst the panoramic views from the public footpaths provide a high landscape value.

The LVA also acknowledges that the quarrying in the Green Belt is not an attractive use of land for the duration of the process.



In 2.6.3 it states the application site has historically been used as a stone quarry and the proposed activity will therefore accord with this previous land use and character. I would suggest that it has been over 100 years since it was operational and that operation was a small in scale (less than 1ha), only occupying the SW section of this proposed application area of approx. 6 ha. There was a short period in the early-80s when some unauthorised works took place in this small quarry area, applications to regularise this and further applications in the 1980s to quarry the area were refused. So, effectively the site as perceived as a working quarry has not taken place within living memory albeit some relatively minor disturbance some 40 years ago in the 1980s.

In relation to 2.6.4 in the landscape character statement reference again is made to the historical context of land use being a factor that reduces the perception of change, but as quarrying was only a small part of the overall site area, this is not applicable for the majority of the site. Again, specifically in relation to Horn Crag, the majority of the site has not been seen as a working quarry in living memory but is now an area with a distinct character due to the natural regeneration in both the former quarry and across other parts of the site, in particular the heathland. Its seen now as a prominent feature on the skyline, especially from lower elevations, with an established recreational use for walkers and local residents.

Section 2.6.5 acknowledges that during the operational phase there will be major adverse visual effects during the 20-year operational phase. Of course given time, if approved, with the restoration maturing and managed appropriately the site would eventually be minor neutral as people forget the previous character and landform. Again, it must be noted the current character has (in the majority of the proposed site) had over a hundred years to naturally regenerate and evolve and even with the disturbance in the early 1980's, some 40 years ago, regeneration is apparent across the whole site. It is noted that the general profile after stone removal will be up to 15m lower that the original levels.

The Visual Assessment and Context.

4.4 Visual Context.

With reference to section 4.4.1, it states from higher elevations the mosaic of vegetation supported on site enables Horn Crag to blend into the landscape scene. This is generally the case from the higher eastern viewpoints but from the west the distinctive character of the gorse, heathland and rough grass contrasts strongly with the general character of the upland pasture. It is acknowledged that from lower elevations, Horn Crag appears as a prominent feature on the skyline.

4.5 Assessment on Effects on Visual Amenity.

Our response is based on the Operational Impact during the proposed 20 years of extraction and acknowledge that due to the phasing different viewpoints will be impacted for different periods over the full extraction and restoration period.

Viewpoints 1 and 2 will be impacted primarily during Phase 6 but would also impact on the longer views across the site to the distant skyline.

Viewpoints 3 to 6. We would suggest the effects to be Moderate Adverse due to the quarrying changing the character of the site which at present bleeds into the wider landscape setting. In conjunction with the existing visual detractors in these viewpoints there will be now an accumulative effect.

Viewpoints 9 – 12. As mentioned earlier our perception from all these western views is that the distinctive character of the gorse, heathland and rough grassland contrasts with the general view of upland pasture and therefore consequently seen as a moderate adverse effect.

The remaining chosen viewpoints 13 – 22 significance are agreed.

Noting that from viewpoints 14- 22 all Major adverse, the proposals would cause a significant deterioration to an existing view.

5.0 Conclusions.

We note that in 5.1.2, and we agree, that the sensitivity to change is high and this is a recognisable and visually distinct landscape, with a strong sense of place and high historic continuity. This is a landscape which is very well used and enjoyed by the public for outdoor recreation, walking, cycling and horse riding. There is a good network of public rights of way which cross the Rombalds Ridge area, leading to a high landscape value.

5.1.4 Whilst the site was historically worked, it was over 100 years ago and for only a small part of the application site. The statement that that further extraction will accord with the historic land use can be debated due to the fact that only a small part of the proposed site was actually worked and it was not within living memory – albeit some small scale disturbance some 40 years ago and the natural regeneration over time has resulted in a site now recognised as a natural asset and recreational area. We would argue that any new working would now be seen as uncharacteristic. The question of time is also a factor, the time beyond the initial 20-year restoration period to reach target habitat conditions and then reach a character similar to the existing site which has taken a minimum of 40 years for a small part of the site and over a hundred years for the majority of the site.

5.1.6 As the site can be seen clearly from all the western viewpoints as well as the elevated locations in the east which are quite some distance from the site, the effects are not limited and localised and will have some impact on the wider landscape character. It has already been noted in 5.12 that the sensitivity to change is high.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE VISUAL BASELINE.

5.2.2. It is agreed that from views at a lower elevation, Horn Crag appears as a prominent feature on the skyline. We would contend that the mosaic of vegetation at the application site enables Horn Crag to blend into the landscape scene, in fact the mix of heather and rough grassland acts as a distinct contrast in an area of predominately of grazed upland pasture, especially from western viewpoints.

5.2.4. As stated previously we consider the accumulative effect to be significant from these viewpoints with a quarry site adding to the impacts of the existing caravan parks at Brown Bank and Cringles.

5.2.5 It is acknowledged that Horn Crag is a prominent feature within this Landscape and the loss of the profile of to up to 15m in height due to the proposed quarry and loss of the distinctive existing vegetation will remove a significant feature in the landscape.

5.2.6 The prominent feature is White Cragg from viewpoints 9 and 10 but due to Horn Crag's vegetation, it is a distinct area within this area of predominately upland pasture and during the operational and restoration period be in our opinion a noticeable deterioration to an existing view.

5.2.7 We would contend the impact for viewpoint 12 is similar to those of 9 and 10. Viewpoint 13 would change the profile and highest point of Horn Crag which is significant.

5.2.8 – 5.2.11 It is acknowledged that from the remaining viewpoints the proposal will result in a major adverse effect.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS.

The statement rightly states the extraction period will be a slow process and we would agree the changes would be gradual but the nature of the site works cannot be said to be sympathetic to the local character as it is in effect a new quarry.

We do acknowledge that if permission is granted, after the possible 20-year period of working operation and the potential 15 years to achieve some full maturity to the restoration that at that point the site should assimilate back into the broader landscape but with a significant change in character, predominately due to the finished changes in level.

We do accept that on completion the proposed exposed rock face will be hidden from the views from the east and south east.

In conclusion, however, the Landscape, Design and Conservation Team cannot support the application due to a culmination of factors:

The loss of an area of distinct character and a local landmark within the broader character area.

The significant impact on recreational use due to the visual impact of the quarry works.

The length of disruption and disturbance locally and on the broader enjoyment of the surrounding Landscape over a minimum of 20 years with potentially an additional 15 years to achieve some maturity in the restored scheme.

The impact on residential properties.