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PROPOSED EXTRACTION OF ROAD STONE
HORN CRAG QUARRY, SILSDEN

This report is prepared following an examination of the attached document submitted by Balfour Beatty Construction. That document is an attempt to give the background to the planning application which is in the course of preparation relating to the planning permission to extract road stone from the quarry.

Attached also is a copy of documentation from the West Yorkshire County Council which sets out the past history, and County Planning view of the existing and past legal situation.

Initial approaches were made by Balfour Beatty, and their agents, to the Local Authority some five weeks ago when their plans were outlined. The position is, at the moment, that they are preparing a tender document to be submitted to the Department of Transport in relation to the construction of Aire Valley (1), that is the route from Kildwick to Keighley. Their tender depends very much upon the availability of the rock fill for this particular section of the route but it is also understood that this is a critical factor which can affect all firms who tender for the same work. I am already aware that there have been other approaches with regard to other existing, and in some cases previously abandoned, quarries in the area where presumably other contractors are looking for sources of this rock fill material. To date there have been no further planning applications in respect of re-opening these quarries, but an update will be given of the current situation when this matter is placed before the Planning Sub-Committee.

In Balfour Beatty's document an attempt is made to outline their proposals for the short-term quarrying of Horn Crag Quarry. The attraction of this quarry to them, quite simply, is that it is the closest quarry to this section of the Airedale Route, and also it utilizes the main road from Cringles to the level crossing at Station Road, Steeton which, on the tender documents, the Department of Transport identify as a suitable haul road for material

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

On the old style West Riding County Council Development Plan approved in 1966, the site is shown to be within the Green Belt and also within an area of High Landscape Value. The approved Development Plan is still in force and its proposals were underwritten by the former West Yorkshire County Council's Structure Plan which was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 8th July, 1980. On the Structure Plan Key Diagram, therefore, the site is already shown to be within the West Yorkshire Green Belt and within an area of Special Landscape. In the draft Upper Airedale District Plan, the site is similarly included with the Special Landscape area and Green Belt.

PRESENT PROPOSAL

The present application seeks permission for the extraction of sandstone from some 17 acres of land, and upon completion, the site would be landscaped and seeded with grass and/or heathers. At the time of the earlier application, the applicants were preparing to tender for Stage 1 of the Airedale Route, and they hoped to gain permission for the taking of stone from the quarry for general rock-fill purposes. The tender was not, however, successful and in re-submitting the application, they hope to be able to supply stone to the contractors who were awarded the contract. Members will know that Messrs. Balfour Beatty did not obtain the contract for Stage 2 either, and in the circumstances the quarry would only be able to supply rock-fill as an alternative to other established sources.

CONSULTATIONS

Yorkshire Electricity Board - The Board have 11Kv. overhead lines within the curtilage of the site, and these could be affected by the present proposal.

British Gas - No objections.

B.M.D.C. Ecological Advisory Service - It is known that parts of the site are occupied by badger setts, and steps must be taken to preserve those habitats.

B.M.D.C. Traffic and Road Safety Unit - Objections are varied against the application on the following grounds:

- i. Access to the site is inadequate by reason of narrow single track roads and sub-standard junctions with existing primary routes.

The consultants then considered the available sources of this material, and point out that, if the source involves a greater travelling time than the net result, in order to meet this requirement would be more vehicles on the road. Their conclusion is that because Horn Crag is closer there would be fewer vehicles on the road at any one time, but they must concede that these same vehicles will be making more round trips during the working day. They also consider that if the material is bought, for example, from Skipton or Keighley, not only would this increase the journey time, but would clog up the already overcrowded trunk road, particularly during the Summer construction period, and overload both Steeton Top and the other congested points of this route.

Section 4 of the report, together with the artist's impression in Appendix 4, gives an indication that they consider that the environmental impact of the quarrying operation will be minimal, and that they are prepared to undertake a considerable amount of restoration at the end of the contract period in order to integrate the quarry face in the landscape. This would, to a large extent, appear to consist of disposing of some waste material from the road contract and depositing it in the quarry, and subsequent grassing over or planting. They then detail the methods of working, but it is pointed out that this will involve daily blasting, and crushing on site.

Section 6 of the report looks at the detail routing of vehicles from Horn Crag to Station Road. In essence there are no alternatives other than using the main road through Silsden, but they have examined the possibility of getting to and from the main road and quarry in some detail. Advice has been sought from the Council's Highways Section, and certain suggestions made with regard to the detailed, off main road, routing. They also suggest that they would impose a speed limit of 15 mph on company vehicles in the High Street section of the route. This is detailed on the map in Appendix 6.

Sections 7 and 8, together with Appendix 7, look at consultations with the statutory undertakers with regard to the quarrying operation, and suggest that there will be no major problem.

Looking at the report as a whole, then it would be seen that there are three main areas of planning concern. The first one must, most clearly, be the environmental aspect of vehicle movement from the quarry to the road works. The contractors argue that, in their view, Horn Crag has many advantages, notably insofar as it would involve fewer lorries on the road at any one time. Nonetheless this would involve a vehicle movement at least every two minutes along the main street in Silsden, added to the already congested situation. Discussions with David Gill of the Traffic and Road Safety Unit would suggest that their view is that Silsden could not take this vehicular movement. They are already aware of the congestion, and are equally aware that there are no alternative routes, or other possibilities available. A comment which has been made, informally, is that the only way to alleviate the traffic congestion currently experienced would be by a Traffic Regulation Order banning parking and loading from the main street during peak hours. This, it is pointed out, would have to be a permanent order because of the length of the contract, and it is anticipated that there would be such an outcry against such an order that not only would it take a long time to get confirmed, but it is most unlikely, at the end of the day, to be confirmed by the Secretary of State. On balance, therefore, the view is taken that this amount of traffic along the main road through Silsden would be unacceptable. The detailing of traffic movement between the quarry and the main road may be possible to be handled with relative ease.

The second consideration would relate to the working of the quarry itself. Initial discussions with the Yorkshire Water Authority indicate several areas of difficulty. A report is attached which gives their formal views on this matter. Summarizing this report the initial problem would relate to the provision of an adequate alternative water supply for the cottages near the quarry site. The developers have indicated that they will be prepared to provide an alternative borehole which could provide water for these cottages. The main area of concern would, however, appear to be the depth of the quarry workings. Initially, in consultations on the previous application, the Water Authority have stipulated a maximum depth of excavation. The details now submitted indicate that this depth

would be exceeded, and thus there would be problems with regard to ground water. The Water Authority anticipate that the effect of removing this amount of material would reduce the water storage capacity of the area, and thus affect boreholes and spring supplies away from the site. This effect could be either diminution of supply, or pollution. There would, so far as is known, be no way of alleviating this off-site problem. The use of machinery and blasting on the site would exacerbate this problem.

The third area of concern would therefore be the environmental impact of the quarry on the landscape. From the artist's impression I am of the opinion that the restoration could be carried out in a reasonable manner, and that, at the end of the day, there could even be environmental advantage in allowing the working of the quarry in order to remove the rubbish and eyesore which have been created by the previous operators. There would, possibly, be other legal ways of achieving this same end, but this would seem to be the strongest argument in favour of granting planning permission which could be raised.

The planning application in respect of this work has now been lodged, and formal notice served under Section 26. There have already been initial approaches by local residents seeking information, and further representations are expected. There have, at the time of writing, been no representations made by local politicians in respect of the effect of traffic through Silsden.

Also appended are the Committee reports and the draft Rule 6 statement which were prepared by the County Council. The summary of these documents is that, although Bradford Council did initially recommend approval to a much less intensive quarrying operation, the County have consistently refused permission, basically on four grounds. These grounds are:-

- 1 The detrimental effect the operations have on the private ground spring water supplies to the neighbouring dwellings.
- 2 The means of access to the quarry are inadequate by reason of the poor highway infrastructure.

- 3 The extraction of minerals from the quarry would be detrimental to the amenities of the area because of the additional noise, dust and traffic generated.
- 4 The inevitable disturbance to protected wildlife habitats.

Looking at these four points then the first conclusion must be that if these factors were relevant for a small block stone operation then they must be equally more relevant with respect to a major intensive quarrying use.

Whilst the applicants have sought to demonstrate that they could alleviate the immediate problem with regard to the water supply of the adjacent cottages, there is fear from the Water Authority that the net effect of the operation could be a dramatic change in the water supply position in this area. There is nothing in the planning application which suggests that this could be ameliorated, although it is known that the applicants are considering this position.

Again given the nature of the operation there are no proposals to make radical changes to the highway infrastructure. The planning application documents do show passing bays on the highways leading to the quarry, but it is inevitable that these unclassified roads will be heavily used, and that there will be some degree of inconvenience to the local users. The position is totally different with regard to the main road and the problems with regard to existing congestion in the main street of Silsden have been noted earlier.

The fact that there will be quarrying, blasting and crushing on site is bound to lead to conditions detrimental to the few houses in the vicinity. Again it is argued that this will be a short term operation, lasting only for the duration of the road contract. This would not, however, diminish the effect on these nearby dwellings by the operations, and there will be noise and disturbance created.

The applicants have again suggested that they would be prepared to consider the wildlife habitat in the area and although they are

not able to give any specific undertakings, they are prepared to consider the position and, during the restoration, re-create conditions which exist to some degree at the moment.

Over all, therefore, it would seem that although this is a particularly attractive quarry to be used commercially by the contractors for the Aire Valley Trunk Road, the over all effects would be severely detrimental to not only the dwellings in the area, but particularly to the traffic and pedestrian flow along Kirkgate at Silsden.

In these circumstances I feel that the recommendation in respect of the planning application should be to refuse.

During the preparation of this report there have been discussions about the alternative means of getting road stone to the site. It must be accepted that where ever the source of material there will be congestion on the main road, and that this could affect, for example Kildwick, as badly as this proposal would affect Silsden. There have been discussions with regard to the possible use of the railway to import the material. The assessment which has been made would suggest that, again on average, there would need to be five one thousand tonne train loads delivered to a suitable siding during each working day of the contract period. It is not known how British Rail would react to this but the size of the operation would indicate, firstly that there are limited sites for such a siding, and that the location of such potential sidings, notably at Steeton, would result in some congestion as the material would have to be transported from the rail siding to the road. There is doubt as to whether the former siding at Steeton could accommodate this level of operation, and also there would, of necessity, be effects on the nearby housing caused by the off-loading and transporting operations. The ability for British Rail to cope with five additional trains a day on the main line are not known, but it has been suggested that, commercially, British Rail may be less than totally helpful with regard to such a proposal. This also pre-supposes that the trains can be loaded at a convenient point, and that this could identify one particular quarry which has a rail head in the yard.